

The Master was talking to a devotee in the Panchavati. The latter had dreamt of Chaitanyadeva.

MASTER (*in an ecstatic mood*) : " Ah me ! Ah me ! "

DEVOTEE : " But, sir, it was only a dream. "

MASTER : " Is a dream a small thing ? "

The Master's voice was choked. His eyes were filled with tears.

Sri Ramakrishna was told of a devotee who had divine visions even while he was awake. The Master said : " I am not surprised. Narendra, too, sees forms of God nowadays. "

Mahimacharan went to one of the Siva temples to the west of the courtyard and chanted hymns from the Vedas. He was alone.

It was eight o'clock in the morning. M. bathed in the Ganges and came to Sri Ramakrishna. The brahmani who was grief-stricken on account of her daughter's death also entered the room.

The Master asked the brahmani to give M. some prasad to eat.

BRAHMANI : " Please eat something yourself first ; then he will eat. "

MASTER (*to M.*) : " Take some prasad of Jagannath first and then eat. "

After eating the prasad, M. went to the Siva temples and saluted the Deity. Then he returned to the Master's room and saluted him. He was ready to go to Calcutta.

MASTER (*tenderly*) : " Go home safely. You have to attend to your duties. "

Tuesday, August 11

Sri Ramakrishna was in his room at the temple garden. He had been observing silence since eight o'clock in the morning. Did he know the fatal nature of his illness ? At his silence the Holy Mother wept. Rakhal and Latu also wept. The brahmani widow from Baghbazar arrived. She too was weeping at this strange mood of the Master. Now and then the devotees asked him whether he would remain silent for good. The Master answered them in the negative, by a sign.

At three o'clock in the afternoon Narayan arrived. Sri Ramakrishna said to him, " The Divine Mother will bless you. " Narayan told the other devotees that the Master had spoken to him. A heavy weight was lifted from their breasts. They all came into the Master's room and sat on the floor.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " The Mother showed me that all this is verily maya. She alone is real, and all else is the splendour of Her maya. "

" Another thing was revealed to me. I found out how far the different devotees have progressed. "

DEVOTEES : " Please tell us about it. "

MASTER : " I came to know about all these devotees : Nityagopal, Rakhal, Narayan, Purna, Mahima Chakravarty, and the others. "

Sunday, August 16, 1885

The news of Sri Ramakrishna's illness had been reported to the devotees in Calcutta. They thought it was just a sore in his throat. Many devotees

arrived at Dakshineswar to visit him. Among them were Girish, Ram, Nityagopal, Mahima, Kishori, and Pundit Shashadhar.

Sri Ramakrishna was in his usual happy mood. He was talking to the devotees.

MASTER : "I cannot tell the Mother about my illness. I feel ashamed to talk of it."

GIRISH : "God will cure you."

RAM : "Yes, you will be all right."

MASTER (smiling) : "Yes, give me your blessing." (*All laugh.*)

Girish was a recent visitor to Dakshineswar. The Master said to him : "You have so many duties to perform. You have to face so many troubles. Come here only three times more."

(*To Shashadhar*) "Please tell us something about the Adyasakti."

SHASHADHAR : "What do I know, sir?"

MASTER (smiling) : "A certain man had great respect for another man. The second man asked him to bring him a little fire for his tobacco. He answered humbly, 'Sir, am I fit to carry your fire?' He didn't bring the fire." (*All laugh.*)

SHASHADHAR : "The Primal Power alone is both the instrumental and the material cause of the universe. It is She who has created the universe and its living beings; further, She Herself has become all these. To give an example: the spider, as the instrumental cause, makes the web and, as the material cause, brings the web out of its own body."

MASTER : "It is also stated that He who is Purusha is also Prakriti; He who is Brahman is also Sakti. He is called Purusha or Brahman when He is inactive, that is to say, when He ceases to create, preserve, or destroy; and He is called Sakti or Prakriti when He engages in those activities. But He who is Brahman is none other than Sakti; He who is Purusha has verily become Prakriti. Water is water whether it moves or is still. A snake is a snake whether it wriggles along or stays still and coiled up."

"What Brahman is cannot be described. Speech stops there. In the kirtan the singers at first sing: 'My Nitai dances like a matahati.'⁵ As they become more and more ecstatic, they can hardly utter the whole sentence. They sing only: 'Hati! Hati!' As their mood deepens they sing only 'Ha! Ha!' At last they cannot sing even that; they become completely unconscious."

As the Master spoke these words, he himself became transfixed in samadhi. He was standing.

Regaining consciousness of the world, he said, "That which is beyond both kshara and akshara cannot be described."

The devotees sat in silence.

MASTER : "You cannot go into samadhi as long as your worldly experiences are not finished, or as long as you have duties to perform."

(*To Shashadhar*) "God is now making you perform such duties as delivering lectures. You must do these things now. You will have peace when your duties are finished. After completing her household duties, the mistress of the

⁵ Mad elephant.

family goes for her bath. She will not come back then even if you shout after her."

Thursday, August 27, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room at Dakshineswar. It was five o'clock in the afternoon. There were two or three devotees with him. While with the devotees he never gave a thought to his physical illness, often spending the whole day with them talking and singing.

Doctor Madhu was treating Sri Ramakrishna. He frequently visited the Master at Dakshineswar, coming by country boat from Calcutta. The devotees were very much worried about the Master; it was their secret desire that the physician should see him daily. M. said to the Master: "Doctor Madhu is an experienced physician. It will be nice if he sees you every day."

Pundit Shyamapada of Antpur arrived. It was dusk. The pundit went to the bank of the Ganges to perform his evening worship; he had some amazing visions during the worship. He returned to the Master's room and sat on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna had just finished meditation and the chanting of the holy names. He was sitting on the small couch and M. on the foot-rug. Rakhal, Latu, and the others were in and out of the room.

MASTER (to M., pointing to the pundit): "He is very nice. (To the pundit) Where the mind attains peace by practising the discipline of 'Neti, neti', there Brahman is.

"The king dwells in the inmost room of the palace, which has seven gates. The visitor comes to the first gate. There he sees a lordly person with a large retinue, surrounded on all sides by pomp and grandeur. The visitor asks his companion, 'Is he the king?' 'No', says his friend with a smile.

"At the second and the other gates he repeats the same question to his friend. He finds that the nearer he comes to the inmost part of the palace, the greater is the glory, pomp, and grandeur. When he passes the seventh gate he does not ask his companion whether it is the king; he stands speechless at the king's immeasurable glory. He realizes that he is face to face with the king. He hasn't the slightest doubt about it."

PUNDIT: "One sees God beyond the realm of maya."

MASTER: "But after realizing God one finds that He alone has become maya, the universe, and all living beings. This world is no doubt a 'framework of illusion', unreal as a dream. One feels that way when one discriminates following the process of 'Not this, not this'. But after the vision of God this very world becomes 'a mansion of mirth'.

"What will you gain by the mere study of scriptures? The pundits merely indulge in reasoning."

PUNDIT: "I hate the idea of being called a pundit."

MASTER: "That is due to the grace of God. The pundits merely indulge in reasoning. Some have heard of milk and some have drunk milk. After you have the vision of God you will find that everything is Narayana. It is Narayana Himself who has become everything."

The pundit recited a hymn to Narayana. Sri Ramakrishna was overwhelmed with joy.

PUNDIT (*quoting from the Gita*): "With the heart concentrated by yoga, with the eye of evenness for all things, he beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self."

MASTER: "Have you read the *Adhyatma Ramayana*?"

PUNDIT: "Yes, sir, a little."

MASTER: "The book is filled with ideas of knowledge and devotion. The life of Sabari and the hymn by Ahalya are filled with bhakti."

"But you must remember one thing: God is very far away from the mind tainted with worldliness."

PUNDIT: "Yes, sir. God is far, far away from worldly intelligence. And God is very near, where that does not exist. I visited a certain zemindar, one Mukherji of Uttarpara. He is now an elderly man; but he listens only to stories and novels."

MASTER: "It is further said in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* that God alone has become the universe and its living beings."

The pundit was delighted. He recited a hymn to that effect from the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavata*:

O Krishna! Krishna! Mighty Yogi! Thou art the Primal Supreme Purusha:

This universe, manifest and unmanifest, is Thy form, as the sages declare.

Thou alone art the soul, the sense-organs, the Lord dwelling in the bodies of all;

Thou art the subtle Great Prakriti, made of sattva, rajas, and tamas;

Thou alone art the Purusha, the Lord dwelling in the bodies of all.

As Sri Ramakrishna listened to the hymn he went into samadhi. He remained standing. The pundit was seated. The Master placed his foot on the pundit's lap and chest, and smiled.

The pundit clung to his feet and said, "O Guru! Please give me God-Consciousness."

After the pundit had left the room Sri Ramakrishna said to M.: "Don't you see that what I have said is coming to pass? Those who have sincerely practised meditation and japa must come here."

It was ten o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna ate a little farina pudding and lay down. He asked M. to stroke his feet. A few minutes later he asked the disciple to massage his body and chest gently. He enjoyed a short nap. Then he said to M.: "Now go to sleep. Let me see if I can sleep better when I am alone." He said to Ramlal, "He [meaning M.] and Rakhal may sleep in the room."

Friday, August 28

It was dawn. Sri Ramakrishna was awake and meditating on the Divine Mother. On account of his illness the devotees were deprived of his sweet chanting of the Mother's name.

Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the small couch. He asked M., "Well, why have I this illness?"

M: "People will not have the courage to approach you unless you resemble them in all respects. But they are amazed to find that in spite of such illness you don't know anything but God."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Balaram also said, 'If even you can be ill, then why should we wonder about our illnesses?' Lakshmana was amazed to see that Rama could not lift His bow on account of His grief for Sita. 'Even Brahman weeps, entangled in the snare of the five elements.'"

M: "Jesus Christ, too, wept like an ordinary man at the suffering of His devotees."

MASTER: "How was that?"

M: "There were two sisters, Mary and Martha. Lazarus was their brother. All three were devoted to Jesus. Lazarus died. Jesus was on His way to their house. One of the sisters, Mary, ran out to meet Him. She fell at His feet and said weeping, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!' Jesus wept to see her cry.

"Then Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus and called him by name. Immediately Lazarus came back to life and walked out of the tomb."

MASTER: "But I cannot do those things."

M: "That is because you don't want to. These are miracles; therefore you aren't interested in them. These things draw people's attention to their bodies. Then they do not think of genuine devotion. That is why you don't perform miracles. But there are many similarities between you and Jesus Christ."

MASTER (*smiling*): "What else?"

M: "You don't ask your devotees to fast or practise other austerities. You don't prescribe hard and fast rules about food. Christ's disciples did not observe the sabbath; so the Pharisees took them to task. Thereupon Jesus said: 'They have done well to eat. As long as they are with the bridegroom, they must make merry.'"

MASTER: "What does that mean?"

M: "Christ meant that as long as the disciples live with the Incarnation of God, they should only make merry. Why should they be sorrowful? But when He returns to His own abode in heaven, then will come the days of their sorrow and suffering."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Do you find anything else in me that is similar to Christ?"

M: "Yes, sir. You say: 'The youngsters are not yet touched by "woman and gold"; they will be able to assimilate instruction. It is like keeping milk in a new pot: the milk may turn sour if it is kept in a pot in which curd has been made.' Christ also spoke like that."

MASTER: "What did He say?"

M: "If new wine is kept in an old bottle the bottle may crack. If an old cloth is patched with new cloth, the old cloth tears away."

"Further, you tell us that you and the Mother are one. Likewise, Christ said, 'I and My Father are one.'"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Anything else?"

M : "You say to us, 'God will surely listen to you if you call on Him earnestly.' So also Christ said, 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you.'"

MASTER : "Well, if God has incarnated Himself again, is it a fractional or a partial or a complete manifestation of God? Some say it is a complete manifestation."

M : "Sir, I don't quite understand the meaning of complete or partial or fractional Incarnation. But I have understood, as you explained it, the idea of a round hole in a wall."

MASTER : "Tell me about it."

M : "There is a round hole in the wall. Through it one is able to see part of the meadow on the other side of the wall. Likewise, through you one sees part of the Infinite God."

MASTER : "True. You can see five or six miles of the meadow at a stretch."

M. finished his bath in the Ganges and went to the Master's room. It was eight o'clock in the morning. He asked Latu to give him the rice prasad of Jagannath. The Master stood near him and said. "Take this prasad regularly. Those who are devotees of God do not eat anything before taking the prasad."

M : "Yesterday I got some prasad of Jagannath from Balaram Babu's house. I take one or two grains daily."

M. saluted the Master and took his leave. Sri Ramakrishna said to him tenderly : "Come early in the morning tomorrow. The hot sun of the rainy season is bad for the health."

Monday, August 31, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna was resting in his room. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. Though ill and suffering, he constantly devoted himself to the welfare of the devotees. Sometimes he felt restless, like a child; but the next moment he forgot all about his illness and became filled with ecstatic love of God. His love for the devotees was like that of a mother for her children.

Two days earlier, on Saturday night, he had received a letter from Purna. Purna had written : "I am feeling extremely happy. Now and then I cannot sleep at night for joy." After hearing the letter the Master had remarked : "I feel thrilled to hear this. Even later on he will be able to keep this bliss. Let me see the letter." He had pressed the letter in the palm of his hand and said : "Generally I cannot touch letters. But this is a good letter. That same night, while the Master was in bed, he had suddenly become covered with perspiration. He had sat up in bed, saying, "It seems to me that I shall not recover from this illness." It had worried the devotees very much to hear this. The Holy Mother had come to the temple garden to wait on Sri Ramakrishna and was living in a room in the nahabat. The devotees, with the exception of one or two, were not aware of her presence. A woman devotee staying with the Holy Mother had begun to pay frequent visits to Sri Ramakrishna in his room. After a few days Sri Ramakrishna had said to her : "You have been

here some time. What will people think about it? You had better go home for a week or so."

Sri Ramakrishna lay in bed, on his side, with his back to the room. After dusk Gangadhar and M. arrived from Calcutta. Gangadhar sat at the feet of the Master, who was talking to M.

MASTER: "Two boys came here the other day. One of them was Subodh. He is Sankar Ghosh's great-grandson. The other, Kshirode, is his neighbour. They are nice boys. I told them I was ill and asked them to go to you for instruction. Please look after them a little."

M: "Yes, sir. They are our neighbours."

MASTER: "The other day, again, I woke up covered with perspiration. I don't understand this illness."

M: "We have decided to ask Bhagavan Rudra to see you once. He is an M.D. and an expert physician."

MASTER: "How much will he charge?"

M: "His regular fee is twenty or twenty-five rupees."

MASTER: "Then don't bother about him."

M: "But we shall pay him four or five rupees at the most."

MASTER: "Listen. Suppose you say this to him, 'Sir, please be kind enough to come and see him.' Hasn't he heard anything about this place?"⁶

M: "Perhaps he has. He has almost agreed not to charge any fee. But we shall pay him a little. If we do that, he will come again."

MASTER: "Ask Dr. Nitai to come. He is a good physician. But what will the doctors do, I wonder? They press my throat and make my illness worse."

It was nine o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna ate a little farina pudding and had no difficulty in swallowing it. He said to M. cheerfully: "I was able to eat a little. I feel very happy."

Tuesday, September 1

Sri Ramakrishna was about to take his bath. A devotee was rubbing his body with oil on the verandah south of his room. M. came there after finishing his bath in the Ganges and saluted the Master.

After bathing, Sri Ramakrishna wrapped himself in a towel and with folded hands saluted the deities in the temples from afar. He could not go to the temples because of his illness.

It was the sacred Janmashtami day, the birthday of Krishna. Ram and other devotees had brought new clothes for Sri Ramakrishna. He put them on and looked charming. Again he saluted the deities.

Gopal Ma brought her Gopala⁷ some food that she had prepared at her home at Kamarhati. She said to the Master sorrowfully, "But you won't eat any of it."

MASTER: "You see, I am ill."

GOPAL MA: "That is my bad luck. Please take a little in your hand."

⁶ Referring to himself.

⁷ The Baby Krishna. Gopal Ma regarded Sri Ramakrishna as Gopala and addressed him by that name.

MASTER : " Please give me your blessing."

A devotee brought some sugar candy. Gopal Ma said, " Let me take it to the Holy Mother in the nahabat." The Master said : " No, keep it here. I give sweets to the devotees. Who wants to send a messenger a hundred times to the nahabat for sugar candy ? Let it be kept here."

It was eleven o'clock in the morning. The devotees were gradually arriving from Calcutta. Balaram, Narendra, the younger Naren, Navagopal, and a Vaishnava from Katoa arrived. Rakhal and Latu were staying with Sri Ramakrishna. A Punjabi sadhu had been staying in the Panchavati for some days.

The younger Naren had a tumour on his forehead. Sri Ramakrishna was strolling in the Panchavati with the devotees. He said to the younger Naren : " Why don't you have your tumour operated on ? It is not in the *throat* but only on the forehead. That is a simple thing. People have their orchitis operated on."

The Punjabi sadhu was going along the foot-path in the garden. The Master said : " I don't attract him. He has the attitude of a jnani. I find him to be dry as wood."

Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees returned to the Master's room. The conversation turned to Shyamapada Bhattacharya.

BALARAM : " Shyamapada said, ' When he, the Master, placed his foot on Narendra's chest, Narendra went into bhava ; but I didn't have that experience.'"

MASTER : " Shall I tell you the truth about it ? It is very difficult to gather the dispersed mind when it is attached to ' woman and gold '. The pundit told me he was called upon to act as arbiter to settle people's quarrels. Besides, he has to worry about his children. But the minds of Narendra and other youngsters are not scattered like that : they are not yet touched by ' woman and gold '.

" But Shyamapada is a grand person."

The Vaishnava from Katoa began to ask Sri Ramakrishna questions. He was squint-eyed.

VAISHNAVA : " Sir, is a man born again ? "

MASTER : " It is said in the *Gita* that a man is reborn with those tendencies that are in his mind at the time of his death. King Bharata thought of his deer at the time of death and was reborn as a deer."

VAISHNAVA : " I could believe in rebirth only if an eye-witness told me about it."

MASTER : " I don't know about that, my dear sir. I cannot cure my own illness, and you ask me to tell you what happens after death !

" What you are talking about only shows your petty mind. Try to cultivate love of God. You are born as a human being only to attain divine love. You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes ; what need is there of knowing how many thousands of branches and millions of leaves there are in the orchard ? To bother about what happens after death ! How silly ! "

Girish Ghosh arrived in a carriage with one or two friends. He was drunk. He was weeping as he entered the room. He wept as he placed his head on Sri Ramakrishna's feet.

Sri Ramakrishna affectionately patted him on the back. He said to a devotee, "Prepare a smoke for him."

Girish raised his head and said with folded hands : "You alone are the Perfect Brahman ! If that is not so then everything is false."

"It is such a pity that I could not be of any service to you." He uttered these words with a tenderness that made several devotees weep.

Girish continued : "O Lord ! please grant me the boon that I may serve you for a year. Who cares for salvation ? One finds it everywhere. I spit on it. Please tell me that you will accept my service for one year."

MASTER : "People around here are not good. Some may criticize you."

GIRISH : "I don't care. Please tell—"

MASTER : "All right. You may serve me when I go to your house—"

GIRISH : "No, it is not that. I want to serve you here."

Girish was insistent. The Master said, "Well, that depends on God's will."

Referring to the Master's throat trouble, Girish said : "Please say, 'Let it be cured.' All right, I shall thrash it out. Kali ! Kali !"

MASTER : "You will hurt me."

GIRISH : "O throat, be cured ! (*He blows at the throat like an exorciser.*) Are you not all right ? If you aren't cured by this time, you certainly will be if I have any devotion to your feet. Say that you are cured."

MASTER (*sharply*) : "Leave me alone. I can't say those things. I can't ask the Divine Mother to cure my illness."

"All right. I shall be cured if it is the will of God."

GIRISH : "You are trying to fool me. All depends on your will."

MASTER : "Shame ! Never say that again. I look on myself as a devotee of Krishna, not as Krishna Himself. You may think as you like. You may look on your guru as God. Nevertheless, it is wrong to talk as you are talking. You must not talk that way again."

GIRISH : "Please say you will be cured."

MASTER : "Very well, if that pleases you."

Girish was still under the influence of drink. Now and then he said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Well, sir, how is it that you were not born this time with your celestial beauty ?"

A few moments later, he said, "I see, this time it will be the salvation of Bengal."

A devotee said to himself : "Why Bengal alone ? It will be the salvation of the whole world."

Girish said, addressing the devotees : "Does any of you understand why he is here ? It is for the liberation of men. Their suffering has moved him to assume a human body."

The coachman was calling Girish. He got up and was going toward the man. The Master said to M. : "Watch him. Where is he going ? I hope he won't beat the coachman !" M. accompanied Girish.

Presently Girish returned. He prayed to Sri Ramakrishna and said, "O God, give me purity that I may not have even a trace of sinful thought."

MASTER : "You are already pure. You have such faith and devotion ! You are in a state of joy, aren't you ?"

GIRISH : "No, sir, I feel bad. I have worries. That is why I have drunk so much liquor."

A few minutes afterwards Girish said : "Lord, I am amazed to find that I, even I, have been given the privilege of serving the Perfect Brahman. What austerities have I practised to deserve this privilege ?"

Sri Ramakrishna took his midday meal. On account of his illness he ate very little.

The Master's natural tendency of mind was to soar into the plane of God-Consciousness. He would force his mind to be conscious of the body. But, like a child, he was incapable of looking after his body. Like a child he said to the devotees : "I have eaten a little. I shall rest now. You may go out for a little while." Sri Ramakrishna rested a few minutes. The devotees returned to the room.

GIRISH : "The guru and the Ishta. I like very much the form of the guru. I am not afraid of him. Why should it be so ? I am afraid of ecstasy. At the sight of ecstasy I run away."

MASTER : "He who is the Ishta appears in the form of the guru. The aspirant practises meditation on a corpse.⁸ When he obtains the vision of his Chosen Ideal, it is really the guru who appears to him and says, 'This is that', that is to say, he points out to the disciple his Ishta. Uttering these words, the guru disappears into the form of the Ishta. The disciple no longer sees the guru. In the state of perfect jnana, who is the guru and who is the sishya ? 'That creates a very difficult situation ; there the teacher and the disciple do not see each other.'"

A DEVOTEE : "Guru's head and disciple's feet."

GIRISH (*joyously*) : "Yes ! Yes ! It is true."

NAVAGOPAL : "But listen to its meaning. The disciple's head belongs to the guru ; and the guru's feet belong to the disciple. Do you understand ?"

GIRISH : "No, that is not the meaning. Haven't you seen the child climbing on the head of the father ? That is why the disciple's feet are mentioned."

NAVAGOPAL : "But then the disciple must feel like a young baby."

MASTER : "There are two classes of devotees. One class has the nature of the kitten. The kitten depends completely on its mother. It accepts whatever its mother does for it. The kitten only cries, 'Mew, mew !' It doesn't know what to do or where to go. Sometimes the mother puts the kitten near the hearth, sometimes on the bed. Devotees of this class give God the power of attorney and thus become free of all worry. The Sikhs said to me that God was kind. I said to them : 'How is that ? He is our Father and our Mother. Shouldn't parents bring up their children after begetting them ? Do you mean to say that the neighbours will look after them ?' Devotees of this class have an unwavering conviction that God is our Mother and our Father.

"There is another class of devotees. They have the nature of the young monkey. The young monkey clings to its mother with might and main. The

⁸ One of the forms of meditation prescribed in the Tantra.

devotees who behave like the young monkey have a slight idea of being the doer. They feel: 'We must go to the sacred places; we must practise japa and austerity; we must perform worship with sixteen articles as prescribed by the sastras. Only then shall we be able to realize God.' Such is their attitude.

"The aspirants of both classes are devotees of God. The farther you advance, the more you will realize that God alone has become everything. He alone does everything. He alone is the Guru and He alone is the Ishta. He alone gives us knowledge and devotion.

"The farther you advance, the more you will see that there are other things even beyond the sandal-wood forest—mines of silver and gold and precious gems. Therefore go forward.

"But how can I ask people to go forward? If worldly people go too far, then the bottom will drop out of their world. One day Keshab was conducting a religious service. He said, 'O God, may we all sink and disappear in the river of bhakti!' When the worship was over I said to him: 'Look here. How can you disappear altogether in the river of bhakti? If you do, what will happen to those seated behind the screen?' But do one thing: sink now and then, and come back again to dry land.'" (*All Laugh.*)

The Vaishnava from Katoa was arguing.

MASTER (*to the Vaishnava*): "Stop that sizzling noise! When butter containing water is heated over a fire, it makes that sound.

"If a man but once tastes the joy of God, his desire to argue takes wing. The bee, realizing the joy of sipping honey, doesn't buzz about any more. What will you achieve by quoting from books? The pundits recite verses and do nothing else.

"What will you gain by merely repeating 'siddhi'? You will not be intoxicated even by gargling with a solution of siddhi. It must go into your stomach; not until then will you be intoxicated. One cannot comprehend what I am saying unless one prays to God in solitude, all by oneself, with a longing heart."

Dr. Rakhal arrived to examine Sri Ramakrishna. The Master said to him eagerly, "Come in and sit down."

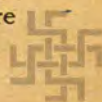
The conversation with the Vaishnava continued.

MASTER: "Man should possess dignity and alertness. Only he whose spiritual consciousness is awakened possesses this dignity and alertness and can be called a man. Futile is the human birth without the awakening of spiritual consciousness.

"There are many men at Kamarpukur with big bellies and imposing moustaches. Yet the villagers go with palanquins and bring righteous and truthful persons from twenty miles away to arbitrate their quarrels. They do not bring mere pundits.

"Truthfulness is the tapasya of the Kaliyuga. 'Truthfulness, submission to God, and looking on the wives of other men as one's own mother'—these are the means to realize God."

⁹ The Master referred to the ladies.



Like a child Sri Ramakrishna said to the physician, "Sir, please cure my throat."

DOCTOR : "Do you ask me to cure you ?"

MASTER : "The physician is Narayana Himself. I honour everybody. You may say that if I look on all as Narayana then I should keep quiet. But I also accept the words of the 'mahut Narayana'."

"The Pure Mind and the Pure Atman are one and the same thing. Whatever comes up in the Pure Mind is the voice of God. God alone is the 'mahut Narayana'."

"Why should I not listen to God ? He alone is the Master. As long as He keeps 'I-consciousness' in me, I shall obey His orders."

The doctor was going to examine Sri Ramakrishna's throat. The Master said, "Dr. Mahendra Sarkar pressed my tongue the way they press a cow's."

Like a child Sri Ramakrishna said to the physician, pulling at his shirt-sleeves again and again, "Sir ! My dear sir ! Please cure my throat." Looking at the laryngoscope, he said with a smile : "I know it. You will see the reflection in it."

Narendra sang. But on account of the Master's illness there was not much music.

September 2

After finishing his midday meal Sri Ramakrishna sat on the small couch and talked to Dr. Bhagavan Rudra and M. Rakhal, Latu, and other devotees were in the room. The physician heard all about the Master's illness. Sri Ramakrishna came down to the floor and sat near the doctor.

MASTER : "You see, medicine does not agree with me. My system is different."

"Well, what do you think of this ? When I touch a coin my hand gets twisted ; my breathing stops. Further, if I tie a knot¹⁰ in the corner of my cloth, I cannot breathe. My breathing stops until the knot is untied."

The Master asked a devotee to bring a rupee. When Sri Ramakrishna held it in his hand, the hand began to writhe with pain. The Master's breathing also stopped. After the coin had been taken away, he breathed deeply three times and his hand relaxed. The doctor became speechless with wonder to see this strange phenomenon.

The doctor said to M., "Action on the nerves."

MASTER (to the doctor) : "I get into another state of mind. It is impossible for me to lay up anything. One day I visited Sambhu Mallick's garden house. At that time I had been suffering badly from stomach trouble. Sambhu said to me : 'Take a grain of opium now and then. It will help you.' He tied a little opium in a corner of my cloth. As I was returning to the Kali temple, I began to wander about near the gate as if unable to find the way. Then I threw the opium away and at once regained my normal state. I returned to the temple garden."

¹⁰ The common people in India tie their money or other small articles in a corner of their cloths.

"One day at Kamarpukur I picked some mangoes. I was carrying them home. But I could not walk ; I had to stay standing in one place. Then I left the mangoes in a hollow. Only after that could I return home. Well, how do you explain that ?"

DOCTOR : "There is a force behind it. Will-force."

M : "He [meaning the Master] says that it is God-force. You say that it is will-force."

MASTER (*to the doctor*) : "Again, I get into such a state of mind that if someone says I am better, I at once feel much better. The other day the brahmani said, 'You are fifty per cent better.' At once I began to dance."

Sri Ramakrishna was much pleased with the physician. He said to him : "You have a very fine nature. There are two characteristics of knowledge : a peaceful nature and absence of pride."

M : "The doctor has lost his wife."

MASTER (*to the doctor*) : "I say that God can be realized if one feels drawn to Him by the intensity of these three attractions : the child's attraction for the mother, the husband's attraction for the chaste wife, and the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man."

"Please cure me of my illness."

The doctor was going to examine the Master's throat. Sri Ramakrishna was seated in a chair on the semicircular porch. Referring to Dr. Sarkar, the Master said : "He is a villain. He pressed my tongue as if I were a cow."

DOCTOR : "He didn't hurt you purposely."

MASTER : "No, he pressed the tongue to make a thorough examination."

Sunday, September 20, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room, surrounded by devotees. Nava-gopal, Haralal, Rakhal, Latu, and others were present. A goswami who was a musician was also there.

M. arrived with Dr. Rakhal of Bowbazar. The physician began to examine the Master. He was a stout person and had rather thick fingers.

MASTER (*smiling, to the physician*) : "Your fingers are like a wrestler's. Mahendra Sarkar also examined me. He pressed my tongue so hard that it hurt me. He pressed my tongue the way they press a cow's."

DOCTOR : "I shall not hurt you, sir."

The physician made out his prescription. Sri Ramakrishna was talking.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : "Well, people ask why, if I am such a holy person, I should be ill."

TARAK : "Bhagavan Das Babaji, too, was ill and bed-ridden a long time."

MASTER : "But look at Dr. Madhu. At the age of sixty he carries food to the house of his mistress ; and he has no illness."

GOSWAMI : "Sir, your illness is for the sake of others. You take upon yourself the sins of those who come to you. You fall ill because you accept their sins."

A DEVOTEE : "You will soon be cured if only you say to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, please make me well.'"

MASTER : " I cannot ask God to cure my disease. The attitude of the servant-master relationship is nowadays less strong in me. Once in a while I say, ' O Mother, please mend the sheath ' of the sword a little. ' But such prayers are also becoming less frequent. Nowadays I do not find my ' I ' ; I see that it is God alone who resides in this sheath."

The goswami had been invited to sing kirtan. A devotee asked, " Will there be any kirtan ? " Sri Ramakrishna was ill, and all were afraid that the kirtan might throw his mind into ecstasy and thus aggravate the illness.

Sri Ramakrishna said : " Let there be a little singing. All are afraid of my going into ecstasy. Spiritual emotion hurts the throat."

The goswami began the kirtan. Sri Ramakrishna could not control himself. He stood up and began to dance with the devotees. The physician watched the whole scene.

A hired carriage was waiting for Dr. Rakhal. He and M. were ready to leave for Calcutta. They saluted the Master. Sri Ramakrishna said to M. affectionately, " Have you had your meal ? "

Thursday, September 24, 1885

It was the night of the full moon. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small couch. He was very ill. M. and some other devotees were sitting on the floor.

MASTER (to M.) : " Every now and then I think that the body is a mere pillow-case. The only real substance is the Indivisible Satchidananda.

" When I go into divine ecstasy this illness of the throat remains away from me. I am now somewhat in that mood and so I feel like laughing."

Some ladies of Dwija's family arrived. They saluted the Master and sat on one side. Pointing to one of the ladies, Sri Ramakrishna asked : " Who is this lady ? Is it she who brought up Dwija ? Why has Dwija bought an ektara ? "

M : " It has two strings, sir."

MASTER : " Dwija's father is opposed to his views. Won't other people criticize him ? It is wise for him to pray to God secretly."

A picture of Gauranga and Nitai hung on the wall of the Master's room. It was a picture of the two brothers singing devotional songs with their companions at Navadvîp.

RAMLAL (to the Master) : " Then may I give him [meaning M.] the picture ? "

MASTER : " Yes."

Sri Ramakrishna was then under Dr. Pratap's treatment. He awoke at midnight and felt extremely restless. Harish, his attendant, was in the room. Rakhal also was there. Ramlal was asleep on the verandah. The Master remarked later on : " I was feeling extremely restless. I felt like embracing Harish. They rubbed a little medicinal oil on my head. Then I began to dance."

¹¹ The Master referred to his body.



XLV

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AT SYAMPUKUR

October 18, 1885

THE DOCTORS HAD DEFINITELY diagnosed Sri Ramakrishna's illness as cancer. No proper arrangement for his treatment and nursing could be made at Dakshineswar. He needed the constant attention of a physician, which could not be given at the temple garden. Furthermore, the devotees who lived in Calcutta found it very inconvenient to attend on him daily at Dakshineswar. Therefore the older devotees had rented a small two-storey house in Baghbazar, Calcutta, and had brought the Master there. Sri Ramakrishna, however, had not liked the place and had gone to Balaram's house. In a few days a new house had been engaged in Syampukur, in the northern section of Calcutta, and the Master had been taken there. He had been placed under the treatment of Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar. The new building had two large rooms and two smaller ones on the second floor. One of the larger rooms was used as the parlour, and in the other the Master lived. Of the two smaller rooms, one was used as a sleeping-room by the devotees, and the other by the Holy Mother when she came there. Near the exit to the roof was a small, covered, square space, where the Holy Mother stayed during the day and prepared the Master's food.

It was Vijaya day, the fourth day of the worship of Durga, when the image is immersed in water. On that day the Divine Mother returns to Her heavenly abode at Mount Kailas, leaving gloom in the hearts of Her devotees.

It was eight o'clock in the morning. The air was chilly. Though ill, Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on his bed. He was like a five-year-old child who knows nothing but its mother. Navagopal, M., and a few other devotees were present. Surendra arrived and sat down. The Divine Mother had been worshipped at his house for the past three days. Sri Ramakrishna had not been able to go there on account of his illness, but he had sent some of his disciples. Surendra was in a very unhappy mood because on this day the image of the Mother was to be immersed in the water.

SURENDRA : "I had to run away from home."

MASTER (to M.) : "What if the image is thrown into the water ? May Mother dwell in the heart !"

Surendra was disconsolate. He was crying to the Divine Mother and talking to Her. At this yearning of his beloved disciple Sri Ramakrishna could not control his tears. He looked at M. and said in a choked voice : "What bhakti ! Ah, what great love he feels for God !"

MASTER (to Surendra) : "Yesterday evening at seven or seven-thirty I saw your worship hall in a vision. I saw the divine image full of effulgence. This place and your hall were joined by a stream of light flowing between them."

SURENDRA : "At that time I was crying to the Mother in the worship hall. My elder brothers had gone upstairs. I thought the Mother said, 'I will come again.'"

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning. Sri Ramakrishna finished his meal. M. poured water into his hand for him to rinse his mouth.

MASTER (to M.) : "Rakhal has indigestion. It is best to take only sattvic food. Haven't you read about it in the *Gita* ? Don't you read the *Gita* ?"

M : "Yes, sir. The *Gita* speaks of temperance in eating. Sattvic food, rajasic food, tamasic food ; sattvic kindness, sattvic ego, and so on—all these are described in the *Gita*."

MASTER : "Have you a copy of the book ?"

M : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "It contains the essence of all the scriptures."

M : "The *Gita* describes various ways of realizing God. You too say that God can be reached by various paths : knowledge, devotion, work, and meditation."

MASTER : "Do you know the meaning of karmayoga ? It is to surrender to God the fruit of all action."

M : "Yes, sir, I have read that in the *Gita*. It also says that there are three ways of performing action."

MASTER : "What are they ?"

M : "First, one may perform karma to attain jnana ; second, to teach others ; third, under the impulse of one's nature."

After rinsing his mouth the Master chewed betel-leaf.

Sri Ramakrishna was talking with M. about Dr. Sarkar. M. had been at the doctor's house the previous day to report the Master's condition.

MASTER : "What did you talk about ?"

M : "There are many books in the doctor's room. I took out one to read, and now and then read a passage aloud to Dr. Sarkar. It was a book by Sir Humphry Davy. He wrote about the necessity of Divine Incarnation."

MASTER : "Indeed ! What did you say to the doctor ?"

M : "There was one passage that stated that Divine Truth must be made human truth to be appreciated by us ; therefore Divine Incarnation is necessary."

MASTER : "Splendid ! That's very good."

M : "The author gave the illustration of the sun : one cannot look at the sun, but one can look at its reflected rays."

MASTER : "Very fine. Anything else ?"

M : "Another passage stated that real knowledge is faith."

MASTER : "That too is very good. If one has faith one has everything."

M : "The author dreamt of the Roman gods and goddesses."

MASTER : "Do such books really exist ? Surely the author was inspired by God. Did you talk of anything else ?"

M : "People like Dr. Sarkar speak of doing good to the world. So I told him what you had said about it."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "What did I say ?"

M : "About Sambhu Mallick. He had said to you : 'It is my desire to devote my money to the building of schools, hospitals, dispensaries, and the like. That will do good to many.' Thereupon you had said to him, 'Suppose God appears before you ; will you then ask Him to build schools, hospitals, and dispensaries ?' I told the doctor another thing."

MASTER : "Those who are born to do work belong to a different class. What else did you say ?"

M : "I said to the doctor : 'If your aim is to visit the image of Mother Kali, what will you gain by spending all your time in giving alms to the poor by the roadside ? First you had better somehow visit the image. Afterwards you may give alms to your heart's content.'"

MASTER : "Did you talk about anything else ?"

M : "Yes. I told him that many of those who come to you have conquered lust. Thereupon the doctor replied, 'I too have conquered lust.' I said : 'You are a great man. It is no wonder that you have conquered lust. But the amazing thing is that under his influence even insignificant creatures have conquered it.' Afterwards I told him what you had said to Girish."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "What did I say ?"

M : "You said to Girish, 'The doctor has not been able to surpass you.' You said that with reference to his calling you a Divine Incarnation."

MASTER : "Discuss the doctrine of Divine Incarnation with Dr. Sarkar. He who liberates others is an Incarnation of God. The scriptures speak of ten, of twenty-four, and also of innumerable Incarnations."

M : "Dr. Sarkar is keenly interested in Girish Ghosh. He always asks me whether Girish has given up drinking. He keeps a sharp eye on him."

MASTER : "Did you tell Girish about that ?"

M : "Yes, sir, I did. And I also told him about giving up drinking."

MASTER : "What did he say ?"

M : "He said : 'Since you all say so, I take your words as the words of the Master himself. But I won't promise anything.'"

MASTER (*joyously*) : "Kalipada told me that he had altogether given up drinking."

It was afternoon. Dr. Sarkar arrived accompanied by his son Amrita and Hem. Narendra and other devotees were present.

Sri Ramakrishna was talking aside to Amrita. He asked him, "Do you meditate ?" He further said to him : "Do you know what one feels in meditation ? The mind becomes like a continuous flow of oil—it thinks of one object only, and that is God. It does not think of anything else."

Sri Ramakrishna was talking to the devotees.



MASTER (*to the doctor*) : "Your son does not believe in the Incarnation of God. That's all right. It doesn't matter if he does not believe in it.

"Your son is a nice boy. Why shouldn't he be ? Does a mango-tree of the fine 'Bombay' variety ever bear sour mangoes ? How firm his faith in God is ! That man is a true man whose mind dwells on God. He alone is a man whose spiritual consciousness has been awakened and who is firmly convinced that God alone is real and all else illusory. He does not believe in Divine Incarnation ; but what does that matter ? It is enough if he believes that God exists, and that all this universe and its living beings are the manifestations of His Power—like a rich man and his garden.

"Some say that there are ten Divine Incarnations, some twenty-four, while others say that there are innumerable Incarnations. If you see anywhere a special manifestation of God's Power, you may know that God has incarnated Himself there. That is my opinion.

"There is another view, according to which God has become all that you see. It is like a bel-fruit, which consists of three parts : seeds, shell, and flesh. That which is the Absolute has also its relative aspect, and that which is the Relative has also its absolute aspect. You cannot set aside the Absolute and understand just the Relative. And it is only because there is the Relative that you can transcend it step by step and reach the Absolute.

"So long as 'I-consciousness' exists, a man cannot go beyond the Relative. Through meditation he can negate the phenomena, following the process of 'Neti, neti', and reach the Absolute ; but nothing can really be denied, as in the instance of the bel-fruit."

DOCTOR : "Quite true."

MASTER : "Kacha had been immersed in nirvikalpa samadhi. When his mind was coming down to the relative plane, someone asked him, 'What do you see now ?' Kacha replied : 'I see that the universe is soaked, as it were, in God. Everything is filled with God. It is God alone who has become all that I see. I do not know what to accept and what to reject.'

"In my opinion one should realize both the Nitya and the Lila and then live in the world as the servant of God. Hanuman saw both the Personal God and the formless Reality. He then lived as a devotee of God, as His servant."

M. (*to himself*) : "So we must accept both—the Absolute and the Relative. Since the introduction of the Vedanta philosophy in Germany, some of the European philosophers, too, have been thinking along that line. But the Master says that one cannot realize both the Nitya and the Lila without complete renunciation, that is to say, without totally giving up 'woman and gold'. Such a person must be a true renouncer ; he must be totally detached from the world. Here lies the real difference between him and such European philosophers as Hegel."

In Dr. Sarkar's opinion, God created men and ordained that every soul should make infinite progress. He would not believe that one man was greater than another. That was why he did not believe in the doctrine of Divine Incarnation.

DOCTOR : "I believe in infinite progress. If that is not so, then what is the use of leading a mere five or six years' existence in the world ? I would rather hang myself with a rope round my neck.

"Incarnation ! What is that ? To cower before a man who excretes filth ! It is absurd. But if you speak of a man as the reflection of God's Light—yes, that I admit."

GIRISH (*smiling*) : "But you have not seen God's Light."

Dr. Sarkar was hesitating before giving a reply. A friend who sat near him whispered something into his ear.

DOCTOR (*to Girish*) : "You too have not seen anything but a reflection."

GIRISH : "I see It ! I see the Light ! I shall prove that Sri Krishna is an Incarnation of God or I shall cut out my tongue !"

MASTER : "All this is useless talk. It is like the ravings of a delirious patient. A delirious patient says, 'I shall drink a whole tank of water ; I shall eat a whole pot of rice.' The physician says : 'Yes, yes. You will have all these. We shall give you whatever you want when you are convalescent.'

"When butter is heated it sizzles and crackles. But all sound comes to a stop when it is thoroughly boiled. As a man's mind is, so is his conception of God. I have seen in rich men's houses portraits of the Queen¹ and other aristocrats. But the devotees keep in their houses pictures of gods and goddesses.

"Lakshmana said, 'O Rama, even a sage like Vasishthadeva was overcome with grief on account of the death of his sons !' 'Brother,' replied Rama, 'whoever has knowledge has ignorance also. Whoever is conscious of light is also conscious of darkness. Therefore go beyond knowledge and ignorance.' One attains that state through an intimate knowledge of God. This knowledge is called *vijnana*.

"When a thorn enters the sole of your foot you have to get another thorn. You then remove the first thorn with the help of the second. Afterwards you throw away both. Likewise, after removing the thorn of ignorance with the help of the thorn of knowledge, you should throw away the thorns of both knowledge and ignorance.

"There are signs of Perfect Knowledge. One is that reasoning comes to an end. As I have just said, the butter sizzles and crackles as long as it is not thoroughly boiled."

DOCTOR : "But can one retain Perfect Knowledge permanently ? You say that all is God. Then why have you taken up this profession of a paramahansa ? And why do these people attend on you ? Why don't you keep silent ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Water is water whether it is still or moves or breaks into waves.

"I must tell you something else. Why should I not listen to the 'mahut Narayana' ? The guru had taught his disciple that everything was Narayana. A mad elephant was coming toward the disciple, but he did not move away since he believed the guru's words. He thought that the elephant was

¹ Queen Victoria.

Narayana. The mahut shouted to him : 'Get away ! Get away !' But the disciple did not move. The elephant picked him up and threw him to the ground. The disciple was not quite dead ; when his face was sprinkled with water he regained consciousness. Being asked why he had not moved away, he said : 'Why should I ? The guru said, "Everything is Narayana."' 'But my child,' said the guru, 'why didn't you listen to the words of the mahut Narayana ?'

"It is God who dwells within as the Pure Mind and Pure Intelligence. I am the machine and He is its Operator. I am the house and He is the Indweller. It is God who is the mahut Narayana."

DOCTOR : "Let me ask you something. Why do you ask me to cure your illness ?"

MASTER : "I talk that way as long as I am conscious of the 'jar' of the 'ego'. Think of a vast ocean filled with water on all sides. A jar is immersed in it. There is water both inside and outside the jar ; but the water does not become one unless the jar is broken. It is God who has kept this 'jar' of the 'ego' in me."

DOCTOR : "What is the meaning of 'ego' and all that you are talking about ? You must explain it to me. Do you mean to say that God is playing tricks on us ?"

GIRISH : "Sir, how do you know that He is not playing tricks ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "It is God who has kept this 'ego' in us. All this is His play, His lila. A king has four sons. They are all princes ; but when they play, one becomes a minister, another a police officer, and so on. Though a prince, he plays as a police officer."

(*To the doctor*) "Listen. If you realize Atman you will see the truth of all I have said. All doubts disappear after the vision of God."

DOCTOR : "But is it ever possible to get rid of all doubts ?"

MASTER : "Learn from me as much as I have told you. But if you want to know more, you must pray to God in solitude. Ask Him why He has so ordained."

"The son of the house can give a beggar only a small measure of rice. But if the beggar asks for his train fare, then the master of the house must be called."

The doctor remained silent.

MASTER : "Well, you love reasoning. All right, Let us reason a little. Listen. According to the jnani there is no Incarnation of God. Krishna said to Arjuna : 'You speak of Me as an Incarnation of God. Let Me show you something. Come with Me.' Arjuna had followed Sri Krishna a short distance, when Sri Krishna asked him, 'What do you see there ?' Arjuna replied, 'A big tree with black berries hanging in bunches.' Krishna said, 'Those are not black berries. Go nearer and look at them.' Arjuna went nearer and saw that they were Krishnas hanging in bunches. 'Do you see now', said Krishna, 'how many Krishnas like Me have grown there ?'

"Kabirdas said of Krishna, 'He danced like a monkey to the clapping of the gopis !'

"As you go nearer to God you see less and less of His upadhis, His attributes. A devotee at first may see the Deity as the ten-armed Divine Mother ; when he goes nearer he sees Her possessed of six arms ; still nearer, he sees the Deity as the two-armed Gopala. The nearer he comes to the Deity, the fewer attributes he sees. At last, when he comes into the presence of the Deity, he sees only Light without any attributes.

"Listen a little to the Vedantic reasoning. A magician came to a king to show his magic. When the magician moved away a little, the king saw a rider on horseback approaching him. He was brilliantly arrayed and had various weapons in his hands. The king and the audience began to reason out what was real in the phenomenon before them. Evidently the horse was not real, nor the robes, nor the armour. At last they found out beyond the shadow of a doubt that the rider alone was there. The significance of this is that Brahman alone is real and the world unreal. Nothing whatsoever remains if you analyse."

DOCTOR : "I don't object to this."

MASTER : "But it is not easy to get rid of illusion. It lingers even after the attainment of Knowledge. A man dreamt of a tiger. Then he woke up and his dream vanished. But his heart continued to palpitate.

"Some thieves came to a field. A straw figure resembling a man had been put there to frighten intruders. The thieves were scared by the figure and could not persuade themselves to enter the field. One of them, however, approached and found that it was only a figure made of straw. He came back to his companions and said, 'There is nothing to be afraid of.' But still they refused to go ; they said that their hearts were beating fast. Then the daring thief laid the figure on the ground and said, 'It is nothing, it is nothing.' This is the process of 'Neti, neti'."

DOCTOR : "These are fine words."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "What kind of words ?"

DOCTOR : "Fine."

MASTER : "Then give me a 'Thank you'." [The Master said the words "thank you" in English.]

DOCTOR : "Don't you know what is in my mind ? I go to so much trouble to come and visit you !"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "No, it is not that. Say something for the good of the ignorant. After the death of Ravana, his brother Bibhishana refused to be king of Ceylon. He said : 'O Rama, I have obtained You. What shall I do with kingship ?' Rama said : 'Bibhishana, be king for the sake of the ignorant, for those who might ask what riches you have gained by serving Me so much. Be king to give them a lesson.'"

DOCTOR : "Are there such ignorant people here ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Oh, yes ! Here you will find oysters and snails as well as conchs." (*All laugh.*)

Doctor Sarkar, who was a homeopath, gave Sri Ramakrishna two globules of medicine. He said, "I am giving you these two globules : one is Purusha and the other is Prakriti." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*): "Oh yes, Purusha and Prakriti are always together. Haven't you observed pigeons? The male and female cannot live separately. Wherever Purusha is, there is Prakriti, and wherever Prakriti is, there is Purusha."

It was Vijaya day. Sri Ramakrishna asked Dr. Sarkar to have some refreshments. The devotees served him with sweets.

DOCTOR (*while eating*): "Now I say 'Thank you' for the sweets; but it is not for your teachings. Why should I give that 'Thank you' in words?"

MASTER (*smiling*): "The essential thing is to fix the mind on God and to practise meditation a little. What more shall I say? (*Pointing to the younger Naren*) Look at him. His mind totally merges in God. Those things I was telling you—"

DOCTOR: "Tell the others also."

MASTER: "No, a man should be given food according to his power of digestion. Can all understand what I told you? I cannot talk to everyone as I talked to you. Suppose a mother has bought a fish for the family. All her children have not the same power of digestion. For some she makes pilau and for others she makes stew. These latter have weak stomachs." (*All laugh.*)

Dr. Sarkar took his leave. It was Vijaya day, when people show their love and respect to their friends and elders with appropriate greetings. The devotees all prostrated themselves before Sri Ramakrishna and took the dust of his feet. Then they embraced one another. Their joy knew no bounds. The Master was seriously ill, but he made them all forget about his illness. The embracing and exchange of greetings continued a long time. The devotees also took light refreshments. The younger Naren, M., and a few other devotees sat near Sri Ramakrishna. The Master talked to them joyfully. He spoke of Dr. Sarkar.

MASTER: "I shall not have to tell him very much. When the trunk of a tree is cut almost to the other side, the cutter steps aside. A little later the tree falls down of itself."

THE YOUNGER NAREN (*smiling*): "Here everything is principle!"

MASTER (*to M.*): "The doctor has already changed a great deal, hasn't he?"

M: "Yes, sir. When he comes here he loses his wits. He never talks about medicine. When we remind him of it, he says: 'Oh, yes, yes! I shall have to give the medicine.'"

Some of the devotees were singing in the parlour. They returned to the Master's room. Sri Ramakrishna said: "I heard your music; but why did you make mistakes in the rhythm? I once heard of a man who was an adept in discord. You sang like him." (*All laugh.*)

A young man, a relative of the younger Naren, arrived. He was bespectacled and foppishly dressed. Sri Ramakrishna spoke to the younger Naren.

MASTER: "You see, a young man was going along the road. He had put on a pleated shirt. And how he strutted! Now and again he would display the shirt by removing his scarf, and then look around to see if anyone was

admiring him. But when he walked you could see that he was knock-kneed. (*All laugh.*) The peacock displays its feathers; but its feet are very dirty. (*All laugh.*) The camel is very ugly. Everything about it is ugly."

YOUNG MAN: "But it acts well."

MASTER: "Yes. But it browses on briars. It will continue to eat thorns though its mouth bleeds. The worldly man loses his children and still clamours for more."

October 22, 1885

It was Thursday evening, a few days after the Durga Puja. Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed in his room on the second floor, with Dr. Sarkar, Ishan, and other devotees. Although Dr. Sarkar was a very busy physician, he would spend a long time—sometimes six or seven hours—in Sri Ramakrishna's company. He had great love for the Master and looked on the devotees as his own kith and kin. A lamp was burning in the room. Moonlight illumined the outside world.

Addressing Ishan, a householder devotee, the Master said: "Blessed indeed is the householder who performs his duties in the world, at the same time cherishing love for the Lotus Feet of God. He is indeed a hero. He is like a man who carries a heavy load of two maunds on his head and at the same time watches a bridal procession. One cannot lead such a life without great spiritual power. Again, such a man is like the mudfish, which lives in the mud but is not stained by it. Further, such a householder may be compared to a waterfowl. It is constantly diving under water; yet, by fluttering its wings only once, it shakes off all trace of wet.

"But a man must practise some spiritual discipline in order to be able to lead a detached life in the world. It is necessary for him to spend some time in solitude—be it a year, six months, three months, or even one month. In that solitude he should fix his mind on God and pray with a longing heart for love of God. He should also say to himself: 'There is nobody in this world who is my own. Those whom I call my own are here only for two days. God alone is my own. He alone is my all in all. Alas, how shall I realize Him?'

"One can live in the world after acquiring love of God. It is like breaking the jack-fruit after rubbing your hands with oil; the sticky juice of the fruit will not smear them. The world is like water and the mind like milk. If you put milk in water it will mix with the water. But first keep the milk in a quiet place and let it turn into curd. Then from the curd extract butter. That butter you may keep in water; it will not mix with the water, but will float on it.

"Some members of the Brahmo Samaj said to me: 'Sir, our attitude toward the world is that of King Janaka. Like him, we want to enjoy the world in a detached spirit.' I said to them: 'To live in the world in a detached spirit is very difficult. By merely saying so you cannot be a King Janaka. How much austerity Janaka practised! How long he remained in one posture, with head down and feet up! You don't have to practise these extreme disciplines. But you need sadhana; you should live in solitude. You may lead the life of a householder after having attained divine knowledge and love in solitude.

Milk turns into curd only when it is not disturbed. The curd does not set if the milk is often moved from place to place or is too much disturbed.'

"On account of his detachment from the world Janaka was also known as the 'Videha', that is, one free from consciousness of the body. Though living in the world, he moved about as a jivanmukta, a free soul living in a body. But for most people freedom from body-consciousness is something very far off. Intense spiritual discipline is necessary.

"Janaka was a great hero. He fenced with two swords, the one of Knowledge and the other of work.

"You may ask, 'Is there any difference between the realizations of two jnanis, one a householder and the other a monk?' The reply is that the two belong to one class. Both of them are jnanis; they have the same experience. But a householder jnani has reason to fear. He cannot altogether get rid of his fear as long as he is to live in the midst of 'woman and gold'. If you constantly live in a room full of soot, you are sure to soil your body, be it ever so little, no matter how clever you may be.

"After extracting the butter, if you keep it in a new pot, then there is no chance of its getting spoiled. But if you keep the butter in a pot where curd has been kept, well, then it is doubtful whether it will keep its flavour. (*Laughter.*)

"When they parch rice, a few grains jump out of the frying-pan to the ground. These are white, like mallika flowers, without the slightest stain on them. But the grains that remain in the pan are also good, though not as immaculate as the fresh mallika flower. They are a little stained. In the same way, if a monk who has renounced the world attains divine wisdom, he appears as spotless as the white flower; but one who stays in the frying-pan of the world after attaining Knowledge may get a little blemish. (*All laugh.*)

"Once a bhairavi came to King Janaka's court. At the sight of the woman, the king bent his head and cast his eyes to the ground. At this the bhairavi said, 'O Janaka, even now you are afraid of a woman!' Through Perfect Knowledge a man becomes like a child five years old; he does not know the distinction between a man and a woman.

"Although a jnani living in the world may have a little blemish, yet this does not injure him. The moon undoubtedly has dark spots, but these do not obstruct its light.

"After realizing God, some souls perform work in order to teach men. Janaka, Narada, and others like them, belong to this group. But one must possess power in order to be able to teach others. The sages of old were busy attaining knowledge for themselves. But teachers like Narada went about doing good to others. They were real heroes.

"A worthless stick floating on the water, sinks under the weight of a bird; but a heavy and substantial log floating on the water can support a cow, a man, or even an elephant. A steamboat not only crosses the water itself but carries many human beings with it. Teachers like Narada may be compared to the heavy log of wood or the steamboat.

"One man, after eating a tasty morsel, removes every trace of it by wiping his face carefully with a towel, lest anyone should know. (*All laugh.*)

Another, again, having got a mango, not only enjoys it himself but shares it with others.

"Even after having attained Perfect Knowledge, teachers like Narada retained love of God in their minds for the welfare of others."

DOCTOR : "Jnana makes a man speechless. He closes his eyes and sheds tears. Then he needs bhakti."

MASTER : "Bhakti may be likened to a woman who has access to the inner court of a house. Jnana can go only as far as the outer rooms."

DOCTOR : "All women are not allowed to enter the inner court, for instance, prostitutes. Hence the need of jnana."

MASTER : "A man may not know the right path, but if he has bhakti and the desire to know God, then he attains Him through the force of sheer bhakti. Once a sincere devotee set out on a pilgrimage to the temple of Jagannath in Puri. He did not know the way ; he went west instead of south. He no doubt strayed from the right path, but he always eagerly asked people the way, and they gave him the right directions, saying, 'This is not the path ; follow that one.' At last the devotee was able to get to Puri and worship the Deity. So you see, even if you are ignorant, someone will tell you the way if you are earnest."

DOCTOR : "But the devotee in his ignorance did lose his way."

MASTER : "Yes, such a thing happens, no doubt. But a man reaches the goal in the end."

A DEVOTEE : "Has God a form or is He formless ?"

MASTER : "God has form and, again, He is formless. Once upon a time a sannyasi entered the temple of Jagannath. As he looked at the holy image he debated within himself whether God had a form or was formless. He passed his staff from left to right to feel whether it touched the image. The staff touched nothing. He understood that there was no image before him ; he concluded that God was formless. Next he passed the staff from right to left. It touched the image. The sannyasi understood that God had form. Thus he realized that God has form and, again, is formless.

"But it is extremely difficult to understand this. Naturally the doubt arises in the mind : if God is formless, how then can He have form ? Further, if He has a form, why does He have so many forms ?"

DOCTOR : "God has created all these forms in the world ; therefore He Himself has a form. Again, He has created the mind ; therefore He is formless. It is possible for God to be everything."

MASTER : "These things do not become clear until one has realized God. He assumes different forms and reveals Himself in different ways for the sake of His devotees. A man kept a solution of dye in a tub. Many people came to him to have their clothes dyed. He would ask a customer, 'What colour should you like to have your cloth dyed ?' If the customer wanted red, then the man would dip the cloth in the tub and say, 'Here is your cloth dyed red.' If another customer wanted his cloth dyed yellow, the man would dip his cloth in the same tub and say, 'Here is your cloth dyed yellow.' If a customer wanted his cloth dyed blue, the man would dip it in the same tub and say,

'Here is your cloth dyed blue.' Thus he would dye the clothes of his customers different colours, dipping them all in the same solution. One of the customers watched all this with amazement. The man asked him, 'Well? What colour do you want for your cloth?' The customer said, 'Brother, dye my cloth the colour of the dye in your tub.' (*Laughter.*)

"Once a man went into a wood and saw a beautiful creature on a tree. Later he told a friend about it and said, 'Brother, on a certain tree in the wood I saw a red-coloured creature.' The friend answered: 'I have seen it too. Why do you call it red? It is green.' A third man said: 'Oh, no, no! Why do you call it green? It is yellow.' Then other persons began to describe the animal variously as violet, blue, or black. Soon they were quarrelling about the colour. At last they went to the tree and found a man sitting under it. In answer to their questions he said: 'I live under this tree and know the creature very well. What each of you has said about it is true. Sometimes it is red, sometimes green, sometimes yellow, sometimes blue, and so forth and so on. Again, sometimes I see that it has no colour whatsoever.'

"Only he who constantly thinks of God can know His real nature. He alone knows that God reveals Himself in different forms and different ways, that He has attributes and, again, has none. Only the man who lives under the tree knows that the chameleon can assume various colours and that sometimes it remains colourless. Others, not knowing the whole truth, quarrel among themselves and suffer.

"Yes, God has form and, again, He has none. Do you know how it is? Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, is like a shoreless ocean. In the ocean visible blocks of ice are formed here and there by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to speak, of the bhakti of Its worshippers, the Infinite transforms Itself into the finite and appears before the worshipper as God with form. That is to say, God reveals Himself to His bhaktas as an embodied Person. Again, as, on the rising of the sun, the ice in the ocean melts away, so, on the awakening of jnana, the embodied God melts back into the infinite and formless Brahman."

DOCTOR: "Yes. When the sun is up, the ice melts; and what is more, the heat of the sun turns the water into invisible vapour."

MASTER: "Yes, that is true. As a result of the discrimination that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory, the aspirant goes into samadhi. Then, for him, the forms or attributes of God disappear altogether. Then he does not feel God to be a Person. Then he cannot describe in words what God is. And who will describe it? He who is to describe does not exist at all; he no longer finds his 'I'. To such a person Brahman is attributeless. In that state God is experienced only as Consciousness, by man's inmost consciousness. He cannot be comprehended by the mind and intelligence.

"Therefore people compare bhakti, love of God, to the cooling light of the moon, and jnana, knowledge, to the burning rays of the sun. I have heard that there are oceans in the extreme north and extreme south where the air is so cold that it freezes the water into huge blocks of ice here and there. Ships cannot move there; they are stopped by the ice."

DOCTOR : " Then in the path of bhakti the aspirant meets with obstacles."

MASTER : " Yes, that is true. But it does not cause the devotee any harm. After all, it is the water of the Ocean of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, that is frozen into ice. It will not injure you if you continue to reason, saying, for instance, that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory. This reasoning will awaken in you jnana, which, like the sun, will melt the ice of divine forms back into the infinite Ocean of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

" In the samadhi that comes at the end of reasoning and discrimination, no such thing as 'I' exists. But it is extremely difficult to attain it ; 'I-consciousness' lingers so persistently. That is why a man is born again and again in this world.

" The cow suffers so much because she says, 'Hamba ! Hamba !' that is, 'I ! I !' She is yoked to the plough all day long, rain or shine. Or she is slaughtered by the butcher. But even that doesn't put an end to her misery. The cobbler tans her hide to make shoes from it. At last the carder makes a string for his bow from her entrails and uses the string in carding ; then it says, 'Tuhu ! Tuhu !', that is 'Thou ! Thou !' Only then does the cow's suffering come to an end.

" Likewise, only when a man says : 'Not I ! Not I ! I am nobody. O Lord, Thou art the Doer and I am Thy servant ; Thou art the Master', is he freed from all sufferings ; only then is he liberated."

DOCTOR : " But one must fall into the hands of the carder." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER : " If this ego cannot be got rid of, then let the rascal remain as the servant of God. (*All laugh.*)

" A man may keep this ego even after attaining samadhi. Such a man feels either that he is a servant of God or that he is a lover of God. Sankaracharya retained the 'ego of Knowledge' to teach men spiritual life. The 'servant ego', the 'Knowledge ego', or the 'devotee ego' may be called the 'ripe ego'. It is different from the 'unripe ego', which makes one feel : 'I am the doer. I am the son of a wealthy man. I am learned. I am rich. How dare anyone slight me ?' A man with an 'unripe ego' cherishes such ideas. Suppose a thief has entered such a man's house and stolen some of his belongings. If the thief is caught, all the articles will be snatched away from him. Then he will be beaten. At last he will be handed over to the police. The owner of the stolen goods will say : "What ! This rogue doesn't know whose house he has entered !"

" After realizing God, a man becomes like a child five years old. The ego of such a man may be called the 'ego of a child', the 'ripe ego'. The child is not under the control of any of the gunas. He is beyond the three gunas. He is not under the control of any of the gunas—sattva, rajas, or tamas. Just watch a child and you will find that he is not under the influence of tamas. One moment he quarrels with his chum or even fights with him, and the next moment he hugs him, shows him much affection, and plays with him again. He is not even under the control of rajas. Now he builds his play house and

² The ego illumined and purified by the Knowledge of God. See foot-note 2, p. 342.



makes all kinds of plans to make it beautiful, and the next moment he leaves everything behind and runs to his mother. Again, you see him wearing a beautiful piece of cloth worth five rupees. After a few moments the cloth lies on the ground ; he forgets all about it. Or he may carry it under his arm. If you say to the child : 'That's a beautiful piece of cloth. Whose is it ?', he answers : 'Why, it is mine. My daddy gave it to me.' You may say, 'My darling, won't you give it to me ?' and he will reply : 'Oh no, it is mine. My daddy gave it to me. I won't give it to you.' Some minutes later you may coax him with a toy or a music-box worth a penny, and he will give you the cloth. Again, a child five years old is not attached even to *sattva*. You may find him today very fond of his playmates in the neighbourhood ; he doesn't feel happy for a moment without seeing them ; but tomorrow, when he goes to another place with his parents, he finds new playmates ; all his love is now directed to his new friends, and he almost forgets about his old ones. Further, a child has no pride of caste or family. If his mother says to him about a certain person, 'This man is your elder brother', he believes this to be one hundred per cent true. One of the two may have been born in a brahmin family and the other may belong to a low caste, say that of the black-smiths, but they will take their meal from the same plate. A child is beyond all ideas of purity and impurity. He is not bound by social conventions. He doesn't hesitate to come out naked before others.

"Then there is an 'ego of old age'. (*Dr. Sarkar laughs.*) An old man has many shackles : caste, pride, shame, hatred, and fear. Furthermore, he is bound by the ideas of worldly cleverness, calculating intelligence, and deceit. If he is angry with anybody, he cannot shake it off easily ; perhaps he keeps the feeling as long as he lives. Again, there is the 'ego of scholarship' and the 'ego of wealth'. The 'ego of old age' is an 'unripe ego'.

(*To the doctor*) "There are a few men who cannot attain knowledge of God : men proud of their scholarship, proud of their education, or proud of their wealth. If you speak to such people about a holy man and ask them to visit him, they make all kinds of excuses and will not go. But in their heart of hearts they think : 'Why, we are big people ourselves. Must we go and visit someone else ?'

"A characteristic of *tamas* is pride. Pride and delusion come from *tamas*.

"It is said in the Purana that Ravana had an excess of *rajas*, Kumbhakarna of *tamas*, and Bibhishana of *sattva*. That is why Bibhishana was able to receive the grace of Rama. Another characteristic of *tamas* is anger. Through anger one loses one's wits and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. In a fit of anger Hanuman set fire to Lanka, without thinking for a moment that the fire might also burn down the hut where Sita lived.

"Still another feature of *tamas* is lust. Girindra Ghosh of Pathuriaghata once remarked, 'Since you cannot get rid of your passions—your lust, your anger, and so on—give them a new direction. Instead of desiring worldly pleasures, desire God. Have intercourse with Brahman. If you cannot get rid of anger, then change its direction. Assume the *tamasic* attitude of *bhakti*, and

say : 'What ? I have repeated the hallowed name of Durga, and shall I not be liberated ? How can I be a sinner any more ? How can I be bound any more ?' If you cannot get rid of temptation, direct it toward God. Be infatuated with God's beauty. If you cannot get rid of pride, then be proud to say that you are the servant of God, you are the child of God. Thus turn the six passions toward God."

DOCTOR : "It is very hard to control the sense-organs. They are like restive horses, whose eyes must be covered with blinkers. In the case of some horses it is necessary to prevent them from seeing at all."

MASTER : "A man need not fear anything if but once he receives the grace of God, if but once he obtains the vision of God, if but once he attains Self-Knowledge. Then the six passions cannot do him any harm."

"Eternally perfect souls like Narada and Prahlada did not have to take the trouble to put blinkers on their eyes. The child who holds his father's hand, while walking along the narrow balk in the paddy-field, may loosen his hold in a moment of carelessness and slip into the ditch. But it is quite different if the father holds the child's hand. Then the child never falls into the ditch."

DOCTOR : "But it is not proper for a father to hold his child by the hand."

MASTER : "It is not quite like that. Great sages have childlike natures. Before God they are always like children. They have no pride. Their strength is the strength of God, the strength of their Father. They have nothing to call their own. They are firmly convinced of that."

DOCTOR : "Can you make a horse move forward without first covering his eyes with blinkers ? Can one realize God without first controlling the passions ?"

MASTER : "What you say is according to the path of discrimination. It is known as jnanayoga. Through that path, too, one attains God. The jnanis say that an aspirant must first of all purify his heart. First he needs spiritual exercises ; then he will attain Knowledge."

"But God can also be realized through the path of devotion. Once the devotee develops love for the Lotus Feet of God and enjoys the singing of His name and attributes, he does not have to make a special effort to restrain his senses. For such a devotee the sense-organs come under control of themselves."

"Suppose a man has just lost his son and is mourning his death. Can he be in a mood to quarrel with others that very day, or enjoy a feast in the house of a friend ? Can he, that very day, show his pride before others or enjoy sense pleasures ?

"If the moth discovers light, can it remain in darkness any longer ?"

DOCTOR (*with a smile*) : "Of course it cannot. It would rather fly into the flame and perish."

MASTER : "Oh no, that's not so. A lover of God does not burn himself to death, like a moth. The light to which he rushes is like the light of a gem. That light is brilliant, no doubt, but it is also cooling and soothing. That light does not scorch his body ; it gives him joy and peace."

"One realizes God by following the path of discrimination and knowledge. But this is an extremely difficult path. It is easy enough to say such



things as, 'I am not the body, mind, or intellect ; I am beyond grief, disease, and sorrow ; I am the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute ; I am beyond pain and pleasure ; I am not under the control of the sense-organs', but it is very hard to assimilate these ideas and practise them. Suppose I see my hand cut by a thorn and blood gushing out ; then it is not right for me to say : 'Why, my hand is not cut by the thorn ! I am all right.' In order to be able to say that, I must first of all burn the thorn itself in the fire of Knowledge.

"Many people think they cannot have knowledge or understanding of God without reading books. But hearing is better than reading, and seeing is better than hearing. Hearing about Benares is different from reading about it ; but seeing Benares is different from either hearing or reading.

"Those actually engaged in a game of chess do not always judge the moves on the board correctly. The onlookers often judge the moves better than the players. Worldly people often think themselves very intelligent, but they are attached to the things of the world. They are the actual players and cannot understand their own moves correctly. But holy men, who have renounced everything, are unattached to the world ; they are really more intelligent than worldly people. Since they do not take any part in worldly life, their position is that of onlookers, and so they see things more clearly."

DOCTOR (*to the devotees*) : "If he [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] had studied books he could not have acquired so much knowledge. Faraday communed with nature ; that is why he was able to discover many scientific truths. He could not have known so much from the mere study of books. Mathematical formulas only throw the brain into confusion and bar the path of original inquiry."

MASTER : "There was a time when I lay on the ground in the Panchavati and prayed to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, reveal to me what the karmis³ have realized through their ritualistic worship, what the yogis have realized through yoga, and what the jnanis have realized through discrimination.' How much I communed with the Divine Mother ! How can I describe it all ?

"Ah, what a state I passed through ! Sleep left me completely."

The Master sang :

My sleep is broken ; how can I slumber any more ?
For now I am wide awake in the sleeplessness of yoga.
O Divine Mother made one with Thee in yoga-sleep⁴ at last,
My slumber I have lulled asleep for evermore.
A man has come to me from a country where there is no night ;
Rituals and devotions have all grown profitless for me.

He continued : "I have not read books. But people show me respect because I chant the name of the Divine Mother. Sambhu Mallīck said about me, 'Here is a great hero without a sword or shield !'" (*Laughter.*)

The conversation turned to the performance of a drama by Girish Ghosh called *The Life of Buddha*. The doctor had seen the play and been much pleased with it.

³ The ritualists.

⁴ Samadhi, which makes one appear asleep.



DOCTOR (to Girish) : "You are a very bad man. Must I go to the theatre every day ?"

MASTER (to M.) : "What does he say ? I don't quite understand."

M : "The doctor liked the play very much."

MASTER (to Ishan) : "Why don't you say something ? (*Pointing to the doctor*) He does not believe that God can incarnate Himself in a human form."

ISHAN : "What shall I say, sir ? I don't like to argue any more."

MASTER (*sharply*) : "Why ? Won't you say the right thing ?"

ISHAN (to the doctor) : "Our faith is shallow on account of our pride. It is said in the *Ramayana* that a crow named Bhushandi did not at first accept Rama as an Incarnation of God. Once it incurred Rama's displeasure. It travelled through the different worlds—the lunar, solar, and so forth—and through Mount Kailas, to escape Rama's wrath. But it found that it could not escape. Then it surrendered itself to Him and took refuge at His feet. Rama took the crow in His hand and swallowed it. Thereupon the crow found that it was seated in its own nest in a tree. After its pride had thus been crushed, the bird came to realize that though Rama looked like any other man yet He contained in His stomach the entire universe—sky, moon, sun, stars, oceans, rivers, men, animals, and trees."

MASTER (to the doctor) : "It is very difficult to understand that God can be a finite human being and at the same time the all-pervading Soul of the universe. The Absolute and the Relative are His two aspects. How can we say emphatically with our small intelligence that God cannot assume a human form ? Can we ever understand all these ideas with our little intellect ? Can a one-seer pot hold four seers of milk ?

"Therefore one should trust in the words of holy men and great souls, those who have realized God. They constantly think of God, as a lawyer of his lawsuits. Do you believe the story of the crow Bhushandi ?"

DOCTOR : "I accept as much as I want to. All difficulties come to an end if only God reveals His true nature to the seeker. Then there can be no confusion. How can I accept Rama as an Incarnation of God ? Take the example of His killing Vali, the monkey chieftain. He hid Himself behind a tree, like a thief, and murdered Vali. This is how a man acts, and not God."

GIRISH : "But, sir, such an action is possible only for God."

DOCTOR : "Then take the example of His sending Sita into exile."

GIRISH : "This too, sir, is possible only for God, not for man."

ISHAN (to the doctor) : "Why don't you believe in the Incarnation of God ? Just now you said that God has form since He has created all these forms, and that God is formless since He has created the mind, which is without form. A moment ago you said that everything is possible for God."

MASTER (*laughing*) : "It is not mentioned in his 'science' that God can take human form ; so how can he believe it ? (*All laugh.*)

"Listen to a story. A man said to his friend, 'I have just seen a house fall down with a terrific crash.' Now, the friend to whom he told this had received an English education. He said : 'Just a minute. Let me look it up in the newspaper.' He read the paper but could not find the news of a house



falling down with a crash. Thereupon he said to his friend : ' Well, I don't believe you. It isn't in the paper ; so it is all false.' " (*All laugh.*)

GIRISH (*to the doctor*) : " You must admit that Krishna is God. I will not let you look on Him as a mere man. You must admit that He is either God or a demon."

MASTER : " Unless a man is guileless, he cannot so easily have faith in God. God is far, far away from the mind steeped in worldliness. Worldly intelligence creates many doubts and many forms of pride—pride of learning, wealth, and the rest. (*Pointing to the doctor*) But he is guileless.

" How guileless Keshab Sen was ! One day he visited the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. At about four in the afternoon he went around to the guest-house, where the poor are fed, and asked when the beggars would be fed. He didn't know that it was too late in the day for the feeding of the poor. As a man's faith increases, so does his knowledge of God. The cow that discriminates too much about food gives milk in dribblets. But the cow that gulps down everything—herbs, leaves, grass, husks, straw—gives milk in torrents. (*All laugh.*)

" God cannot be realized without childlike faith. The mother says to her child, pointing to a boy, ' He is your elder brother.' And the child at once believes that the boy is one hundred per cent his brother. Again, the mother says that a boggy man lives in a certain room, and the child believes one hundred per cent that the boggy man lives in the room. God bestows His grace on the devotee who has this faith of a child. God cannot be realized by the mind steeped in worldliness."

DOCTOR (*to the devotees*) : " It is not right, however, to make the cow yield milk by feeding her all sorts of things. One of my cows was fed that way. I drank its milk and the result was that I became seriously ill. At first I was at a loss to know the cause. After much inquiry I found out that the cow had been given the wrong things to eat. I was in a great fix. I had to go to Lucknow for a change to get rid of the illness. I spent twelve thousand rupees. (*Roars of laughter.*)

" It is very difficult always to find out the precise relationship between cause and effect. A child of seven months, in a wealthy family, had an attack of whooping-cough. I was called in for consultation. Even after much effort I could not find out the cause of the illness. At last I learnt that the child had been given the milk of an ass that had been drenched in the rain." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " How strange ! It is like saying that a man has an acid stomach because he passed, in his coach, under a tamarind tree." (*All laugh.*)

DOCTOR (*with a smile*) : " Let me tell you another. The captain of a ship had a bad headache. After consultation, the doctors on board had a blister applied to the side of the boat." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*to the doctor*) : " For the seekers of God the constant company of holy men is necessary. The disease of worldly people has become chronic, as it were. They should carry out the instruction of holy men. What will

they gain by merely listening to their advice? They must not only take the prescribed medicine, but also follow a strict diet. Diet is important."

DOCTOR: "Yes, it is the diet, more than anything else, that causes the cure."

MASTER: "There are three classes of physicians; superior, mediocre, and inferior. The inferior physician feels the patient's pulse, merely asks him to take medicine, and then goes away. He doesn't bother to find out whether the patient has followed his directions. The mediocre physician gently tries to persuade the patient to take the medicine. He says: 'Look here. How can you get well without medicine? Take the medicine, my dear. I am preparing it with my own hands.' But the superior physician follows a different method. If he finds the patient stubbornly refusing to swallow the medicine, he presses the patient's chest with his knee and forces the medicine down his throat."

DOCTOR: "There is a form of treatment that does not require the physician to press the patient's chest with his knee. For instance, homeopathy."

MASTER: "There is no fear if a good physician presses the patient's chest with his knee."

"Like the physicians, there are three classes of religious teachers. The inferior teacher is content with merely giving spiritual instruction: he doesn't bother about the student after that. The mediocre teacher explains the teaching again and again for the good of the student, that he may assimilate it; he persuades the student through love and kindness to follow it. But the superior teacher uses force, if necessary, on the stubborn student."

(To the doctor) "The renunciation of 'woman and gold' is meant for the sannyasi. He must not look even at the picture of a woman. Do you know what a woman is to a man? She is like spiced pickle. The very thought of pickle brings water to the tongue; it doesn't have to be brought near the tongue."

"But this renunciation is not meant for householders like you. It is meant only for sannyasis. You may live among women, as far as possible in a spirit of detachment. Now and then you must retire into solitude and think of God. Women must not be allowed there. You can lead an unattached life to a great extent if you have faith in God and love for Him. After the birth of one or two children a married couple should live as brother and sister. They should then constantly pray to God that their minds may not run after sense pleasures any more and that they may not have any more children."

GIRISH (to the doctor, with a smile): "You have already spent three or four hours here. What about your patients?"

DOCTOR: "Well, my practice and patients! I shall lose everything on account of your paramahansa!" (All laugh.)

MASTER: "There is a river called the 'Karmanasa'.⁵ It is very dangerous to dive into that river. If a man plunges into its waters he cannot perform any more action. It puts an end to his duties." (All laugh.)

DOCTOR (to Girish, M., and the other devotees): "My friends, consider me as one of you. I am not saying this as a physician. But if you think of me as your own, then I am yours."

⁵ Literally, "destroyer of duties".

MASTER (*to the doctor*): "There is such a thing as love for love's sake. It is very good if one can grow such love. Prahlada loved God for the sake of love. A devotee like Prahlada says: 'O God, I do not want wealth, fame, creature comforts, or any such thing. Please grant me the boon that I may have genuine love for Thy Lotus Feet.'"

DOCTOR: "You are right, sir. I have seen people bowing down before the image of Kali. They seek worldly objects from the Goddess, such as a job, the healing of disease, and so forth.

(*To the Master*) "The illness you are suffering from does not permit the patient to talk with people. But my case is an exception. You may talk with me when I am here." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER: "Please cure my illness. I cannot chant the name and glories of God."

DOCTOR: "Meditation is enough."

MASTER: "What do you mean? Why should I lead a monotonous life? I enjoy my fish in a variety of dishes: curried fish, fried fish, pickled fish, and so forth! Sometimes I worship God with rituals, sometimes I repeat His name, sometimes I meditate on Him, sometimes I sing His name and glories, sometimes I dance in His name."

DOCTOR: "Neither am I monotonous."

MASTER: "Your son Amrita does not believe in the Incarnation of God. What is the harm in that? One realizes God even if one believes Him to be formless. One also realizes God if one believes that God has form. Two things are necessary for the realization of God: faith and self-surrender. Man is ignorant by nature. Errors are natural to him. Can a one-seer pot hold four seers of milk? Whatever path you may follow, you must pray to God with a restless heart. He is the Ruler of the soul within. He will surely listen to your prayer if it is sincere. Whether you follow the ideal of the Personal God or that of the Impersonal Truth, you will realize God alone, provided you are restless for Him. A cake with icing tastes sweet whether you eat it straight or sidewise.

"Your son Amrita is a nice boy."

DOCTOR: "He is your disciple."

MASTER (*with a smile*): "There is not a fellow under the sun who is my disciple. On the contrary, I am everybody's disciple. All are the children of God. All are His servants. I too am a child of God. I too am His servant. 'Uncle Moon' is every child's uncle!"



XLVI

THE MASTER AND DR. SARKAR

Friday, October 23, 1885

IT WAS THE DAY of the full moon following the Durga Puja, the worship of the Divine Mother. At ten o'clock in the morning Sri Ramakrishna was talking to M., who was helping him with his socks.

MASTER (*smiling*): "Why can't I cut my woollen scarf into two pieces and wrap them around my legs like socks? They will be nice and warm."

M. smiled. The previous evening Sri Ramakrishna had had a long conversation with Dr. Sarkar. Referring to it, the Master said laughingly, "I told him the story of the calf, and about egotism being the cause of all suffering."

The younger Naren reminded Sri Ramakrishna that he, the Master, had told the doctor about people's suffering from the threefold misery of the world and still bragging of their well-being. The disciple said, "That was a very nice thing you said yesterday about the thorn, and also about burning it in the fire of Knowledge."

MASTER: "I had direct visions of those things. One day I was passing back of the kuthi when my whole body burst into flames, as it were, like the fire in a homa. Padmalochan once said to me, 'I shall convene an assembly of pundits and proclaim your spiritual experiences before all.' But he died shortly after."

At eleven o'clock M. went to Dr. Sarkar's house to report Sri Ramakrishna's condition. The doctor showed great eagerness to hear about him.

DOCTOR (*laughing*): "How well I told him yesterday that in order to be able to say 'Tuhu! Tuhu!', 'Thou! Thou!', one must fall into the hands of an expert carder!"

M: "It is true, sir. One cannot get rid of egotism without the help of a capable teacher. How well he spoke last night of bhakti! Bhakti, like a woman, can go into the inner court."

DOCTOR: "Yes, that is very nice. But still one cannot give up jnana."

M: "But he does not say that. He accepts both knowledge and love, the Impersonal Truth and the Personal God. He says that through the cooling influence of bhakti a part of the Reality takes the solid form of the Personal God; and with the rise of the sun of jnana the ice of form melts again into

the formless water of the Absolute. In other words, you realize God with form through bhaktiyoga, and the formless Absolute through jnanayoga.

"You must have noticed that he sees God so near him that he always converses with Him. When suffering from illness, he says to God, like a small child, 'Oh, Mother, it is hurting me!'"

"How wonderful his power of observation is! He saw a fossil in the museum. At once he gave it as an example of the effect of companionship with holy persons. Just as an object is turned into stone by remaining near stone, so does a man become holy by living with a holy man."

DOCTOR : "Yesterday Ishan Babu talked of the Incarnation of God. What is that? To call man God!"

M : "Everyone has his own faith. What is the use of interfering with it?"

DOCTOR : "Yes, what is the use?"

M : "How the Master made us laugh when he told us about a certain man who refused to believe that a house had collapsed, because it was not published in the newspaper!"

Doctor Sarkar remained silent. Sri Ramakrishna had said to him, "Your 'science' does not speak of God's Incarnation; therefore you say that God cannot incarnate Himself as man."

It was midday. Doctor Sarkar took M. with him in his carriage. He was going to visit Sri Ramakrishna after seeing his other patients.

A few days before, at Girish's invitation, Doctor Sarkar had seen his play about Buddha's life. He said to M.: "It would have been better to speak of Buddha as the Incarnation of Compassion. Why did he speak of him as an Incarnation of Vishnu?"

The doctor set M. down at the corner of Cornwallis Square.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. One or two devotees were seated near Sri Ramakrishna. He became impatient, like a child. Repeatedly he asked the devotees, "When is the doctor coming?" "What time is it now?" Doctor Sarkar was expected in the evening.

Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna was overwhelmed with a strange mood. He placed his pillow on his lap. Filled with maternal love, he began to caress it and hold it to his breast as if it were his child. He was in an ecstatic mood. His face was lighted with a childlike smile. He put on his cloth in a strange manner. The devotees looked at him in amazement.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna was in his normal mood. It was time for his meal. He ate a little boiled farina.

He was talking to M. about his mystic experiences.

MASTER (to M., aside) : "Do you know what I saw just now in my ecstatic state? There was a meadow covering an area of seven or eight miles, through which lay the road to Sihore. I was alone in that meadow. I saw a sixteen-year-old paramahansa boy exactly like the one I had seen in the Panchavati.

"A mist of bliss lay all around. Out of it emerged a boy thirteen or fourteen years old. I saw his face. He looked like Purna. Both of us were

naked. Then we began to run around joyfully in the meadow. Purna felt thirsty. He drank some water from a tumbler and offered me what was left. I said to him, 'Brother, I cannot take your leavings.' Thereupon he laughed, washed the glass, and brought me fresh water."

Sri Ramakrishna was again in samadhi. He regained consciousness and began to talk to M.

MASTER : "My mind is undergoing a change. I cannot take prasad any more. The Real and the Appearance are becoming one to me. Do you know what I saw just now ? A divine form—a vision of the Divine Mother. She had a child in Her womb. She gave birth to it and the next instant began to swallow it ; and as much of it as went into Her mouth became void. It was revealed to me that everything is void. The Divine Mother said to me, as it were : 'Come confusion ! Come delusion ! Come !'"

This reminded M. of Sri Ramakrishna's saying that the magician alone is real and all else unreal.

MASTER : "Well, how is it that the other time I tried to attract Purna but failed ? This weakens my faith a little."

M : "But to attract a person is to work a miracle."

MASTER : "Yes, a downright miracle."

M : "You remember, one day we were returning to Dakshineswar in a carriage from Adhar's house, when a bottle broke. One of us said to you : 'Does this mean that any harm will befall us ? What do you think ?' You said : 'What do I care ? Why should I bother about it ? That would be miracle-working.'"

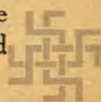
MASTER : "Yes, people lay ailing children down on the ground where men chant the name of God, in order that they may be cured ; or people cure disease through occult powers. All this is miracle-working. Only those whose spiritual experience is extremely shallow call on God for the healing of disease."

It was evening. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on his bed, thinking of the Divine Mother and repeating Her hallowed name. The devotees sat near him in silence. Latu, Sashi, Sarat, the younger Naren, Paltu, Bhupati, Girish, and others were present. Ramtaran of the Star Theatre had come with Girish to entertain Sri Ramakrishna with his singing. A few minutes later Dr. Sarkar arrived.

DOCTOR (*to the Master*) : "I was much worried about you last night at three o'clock. It was raining. I said to myself, 'Who knows whether or not the doors and windows of his room are shut ?'"

"Really ?" said Sri Ramakrishna. He was much pleased at the doctor's love and thoughtfulness for him.

MASTER : "As long as there is the body, one should take care of it. But I find that the body is quite separate from the Self. When a man rids himself entirely of his love for 'woman and gold', then he clearly perceives that the body is one thing and the Self another. When the milk inside the coconut is all dried up, then the kernel becomes separated from the shell ; you feel the kernel rattling inside when you shake the coconut. Or it is just like a sword and its sheath. The sword is one thing and the sheath is another.



"Therefore I cannot speak much to the Divine Mother about the illness of the body."

GIRISH (*to the devotees*): "Pundit Shashadar said to him [meaning the Master]: 'Please bring your mind to bear on the body during samadhi. That will cure your illness.' And he, the Master, saw in a vision that the body was nothing but a loose mass of flesh and bones."

MASTER: "Once, a long time ago, I was very ill. I was sitting in the Kali temple. I felt like praying to the Divine Mother to cure my illness, but couldn't do so directly in my own name. I said to Her, 'Mother, Hriday asks me to tell You about my illness.' I could not proceed any farther. At once there flashed into my mind the Museum of the Asiatic Society, and a human skeleton strung together with wire. I said to Her, 'Please tighten the wire of my body like that, so that I may go about singing Your name and glories.' It is impossible for me to ask for occult powers."

"At first Hriday asked me—I was then under his control—to pray to the Mother for powers. I went to the temple. In a vision I saw a widow thirty or thirty-five years old, covered with filth. It was revealed to me that occult powers are like that filth. I became angry with Hriday because he had asked me to pray for powers."

Ramtaran began to sing :

Behold my vina, my dearly beloved,
My lute of sweetest tone ;
If tenderly you play on it,
The strings will waken, at your touch,
To rarest melodies.
Tune it neither low nor high,
And from it in a hundred streams
The sweetest sound will flow ;
But over-slack the strings are mute,
And over-stretched they snap in twain.

DOCTOR (*to Girish*) : "Is it an original song ?"

GIRISH : "No, it is an adaptation from Edwin Arnold."

Ramtaran sang from the play, *The Life of Buddha* :

We moan for rest, alas ! but rest can never find ;
We know not whence we come, nor where we float away.
Time and again we tread this round of smiles and tears ;
In vain we pine to know whither our pathway leads,
And why we play this empty play.

We sleep, although awake, as if by a spell bewitched ;
Will darkness never break into the light of dawn ?
As restless as the wind, life moves unceasingly :
We know not who we are, nor whence it is we come ;
We know not why we come, nor where it is we drift ;
Sharp woes dart forth on every side.

How many drift about, now gay, now drowned in tears !
One moment they exist ; the next they are no more.
We know not why we come, nor what our deeds have been,
Nor, in our bygone lives, how well we played our parts ;

Like water in a stream, we cannot stay at rest ;
Onward we flow for evermore.

Burst Thou our slumber's bars, O Thou that art awake !
How long must we remain enmeshed in fruitless dreams ?
Are you indeed awake ? Then do not longer sleep !
Thick on you lies the gloom fraught with a million woes.
Rise, dreamer, from your dream, and slumber not again !
Shine forth, O Shining One, and with Thy shafts of light
Slay Thou the blinding dark ! Our only Saviour Thou !
We seek deliverance at Thy feet.

As Sri Ramakrishna listened to the song he went into samadhi.
Ramtaran sang again :

Blow, storm ! Rage and roar ! . . .

When the song was over, Sri Ramakrishna said to the singer : " What is this ? Why this decoction of bitter neem-leaves after the rice pudding ? The moment you sang—

Shine forth, O Shining One, and with Thy shafts of light
Slay Thou the blinding dark !

I had a vision of the Sun. As He arose, the darkness vanished, and all men took refuge at His feet."

Ramtaran sang again:

O Mother, Saviour of the helpless, Thou the Slayer of sin !
In Thee do the three gunas dwell—sattva, rajas, and tamas.
Thou dost create the world ; Thou dost sustain it and destroy it ;
Binding Thyself with attributes, Thou yet transcendest them ;
For Thou, O Mother, art the All.
Kali Thou art, and Tara, and Thou the Ultimate Prakriti ;
Thou art the Fish, the Turtle, the Boar, and all other Avatars ;
Earth, water, air, and fire art Thou, and Thou the sky,
O Mother of the Absolute !

The Samkhya, Patanjala, Mimamsaka, and Nyaya
For ever seek to fathom Thee and know Thine inmost nature ;
Vedanta and Vaiseshika are searching after Thee ;
But none of them has found Thee out.
Though free of limitations, beginningless and without end,
Yet for Thy loving bhaktas' sake Thou wearest varying forms.
The terrors of this world Thou dost remove, and Thou dost dwell
Alike in present, past, and future.

Thou dost appear with form, to him who loves Thee as a Person ;
Thou art the Absolute, to him who worships formless Truth.
Some there are who speak alone of the resplendent Brahman ;
Even this, O Blissful Mother, is nothing else but Thee !
Each man, according to his measure, makes his image of the Truth,
Calling it the Highest Brahman.
Beyond this does Turiya shine, the Indescribable ;
O Mother of all things, who dost pervade the universe,
Every one of these art Thou !



Then he sang :

Dear friend, my religion and piety have come to an end :
 No more can I worship Mother Syama ; my mind defies control.
 Oh, shame upon me ! Bitter shame !
 I try to meditate on the Mother with sword in hand,
 Wearing Her garland of human heads ;
 But it is always the Dark One,¹ wearing His garland of wild wood-
 flowers
 And holding the flute to His tempting lips,
 That shines before my eyes.

I think of the Mother with Her three eyes, but alas ! I see
 Him alone with the arching eyes, and I forget all else !
 Oh, shame upon me ! Bitter shame !
 I try to offer fragrant flowers at the Mother's feet,
 But the ravishing thought of His graceful form unsettles my help-
 less mind,
 And all my meditations meant for the Naked One² are drawn away
 By the sight of His yellow scarf.

Sri Ramakrishna was in an ecstatic mood as he listened to the song.
 The musician sang again :

O Mother, who has offered these red hibiscus flowers at Thy feet ?
 I beg of Thee, O Mother, place one or two upon my head.
 Then I shall cry aloud to Thee, " Oh, Mother ! Mother ! "
 And I shall dance around Thee and clap my hands for joy,
 And Thou wilt look at me and laugh, and tie the flowers in my hair.

The singing was over. Many of the devotees were in a rapturous mood.
 There was a deep silence in the room. The younger Naren was absorbed in
 meditation. He sat like a stump. Pointing him out to the doctor, Sri Rama-
 krishna said, " A very pure soul, unstained by the slightest touch of worldliness."

MANOMOHAN (*to the doctor*) : " He (*pointing to the Master*) says of your
 son, ' I don't care for the father if I have the son.' "

DOCTOR : " Ah, you see ! That is why I say that you forget everything
 else when you have the ' Son ' ."³

MASTER (*smiling*) : " I don't say that I do not want the Father."

DOCTOR : " Yes, I understand you. How can you save your face unless
 you say a few things like that ? "

MASTER : " Your boy is quite guileless. One day Sambhu's face became
 red as he said, ' God will surely listen to a man's prayer if he prays to Him
 with sincerity.' "

" Why am I so fond of the boys ? They are like unadulterated milk :
 only a little boiling is needed. Moreover it can be offered to the Deity. But milk
 adulterated with water needs much boiling. It consumes a large quantity
 of fuel.

¹ Krishna.

² Syama.

³ A man forgets God the Father, being engrossed in the Son, the Avatar or Incarnation.

"The boys are like fresh earthen pots, good vessels in which one can keep milk without any worry. Spiritual instruction arouses their inner consciousness without delay. But it is not so with the worldly-minded. One is afraid to keep milk in a pot that has been used for curd. The milk may turn sour.

"Your boy is still free from worldliness, untouched by 'woman and gold'."

DOCTOR : "That is because he is living on his father's earnings. I should love to see how free he would keep himself from worldliness if he had to earn his own livelihood."

MASTER : "Yes, yes. That is true. But God is far, far away from the worldly-minded. For those who have renounced the world He is in the palm of the hand.

(To Dr. Sarkar and Dr. Dukari) "But renunciation of 'woman and gold' is not meant for you. You may renounce these mentally. That is why I said to the goswamis : 'Why do you speak of renunciation ? That will not do for you. You have to attend the daily worship of Syamasundar.'

"Total renunciation is for sannyasis. They must not look even at the picture of a woman. To them a woman is poison. They must keep themselves at least ten cubits away from her ; and if that is not possible, at least one cubit. And they must not talk much with a woman, no matter how devout she may be. Further, they should choose their dwelling at a place where they will never, or scarcely ever, see the face of a woman.

"Money, too, is like poison to a sannyasi. If he keeps money with him, he has worries, pride, anger, and the desire for physical comforts. Money inflames his rajas, which brings tamas in its train. Therefore a sannyasi must not touch 'gold'. 'Woman and gold' makes him forget God.

"For householders money is a means of getting food, clothes, and a dwelling place, worshipping the Deity, and serving holy men and devotees.

"It is useless to try to hoard money. With great labour the bees build a hive ; but a man breaks it and takes the honey away."

DOCTOR : "Whom shall we hoard for ?—For a wicked son, perhaps."

MASTER : "It is not a wicked son alone. Perhaps the wife is unchaste. She may have a secret lover. Perhaps she will give him your watch and chain !

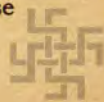
"You should not renounce woman completely. It is not harmful for a householder to live with his wife. But after the birth of one or two children, husband and wife should live as brother and sister.

"It is attachment to 'woman and gold' that begets pride of learning, pride of money, and pride of social position.

"One cannot attain divine knowledge till one gets rid of pride. Water does not stay on the top of a mound ; but into low land it flows in torrents from all sides."

DOCTOR : "But the water that flows into the low land from all sides contains good water and bad water, muddy water and ditch-water. Again, there are hollows on mountain-tops as well, as at Nainital and Manasarovar. These contain only pure water from the sky."

MASTER : "Only pure water from the sky—that is good !"



DOCTOR : " Further, from an elevated place the water can be distributed on all sides."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " A certain man came to possess a siddha mantra.⁴ He then went to the top of a hill and cried aloud, ' Repeat this mantra and you will realize God.' "

DOCTOR : " Yes."

MASTER : " But you must remember one thing. When his soul feels restless for God, a man forgets the difference between good water and ditch-water. In order to know God, he sometimes goes to good men, sometimes to imperfect men. Dirty water cannot injure an aspirant if God's grace descends on him. When God grants him Knowledge, He reveals to the aspirant what is good and what is bad.

" There may be hollows on the top of a hill, but they cannot exist on the hill of the ' wicked ego '. Only if it is an ' ego of Knowledge ' or an ' ego of bhakti ', does the pure water from the sky collect there.

" It is true that the water from a hill-top may flow in all directions ; but that is possible only from the hill of the ' ego of Knowledge '.

" One cannot teach men without the command of God. After attaining Knowledge, Sankaracharya retained the ' ego of Knowledge ' in order to teach mankind. But to lecture without realizing God ! What good will that do ?

" I went to the Nandanbagan Brahmo Samaj. After the worship the preacher gave a lecture from the raised platform. He had written it at home. As he read from the manuscript he looked around. While meditating he opened his eyes from time to time to look at people.

" The instruction of a man who has not seen God does not produce the right effect. He may say one thing rightly, but he becomes confused about the next.

" Samadhyayi delivered a lecture. He said : ' God is beyond words and mind ; He is dry. Worship Him through the bliss of your love and devotion.' Just see, he thus described God, whose very nature is Joy and Bliss ! What will such a lecture accomplish ? Can it teach people anything ? Such a lecturer is like the man who said, ' My uncle's cow-shed is full of horses.' Horses in the cow-shed ! (*All laugh.*) From that you can understand that there were no horses at all."

DOCTOR (*smiling*) : " Nor cows either ! " (*All laugh.*)

In the mean time the devotees who had been in a rapturous state had regained their normal mood. The doctor was highly pleased with them and asked M. about them. M. introduced to him Paltu, the younger Naren, Bhupati, Sarat, Sashi, and the other youngsters. About Sashi, M. said, " He is going to appear for the B. A. examination."

The doctor was a little inattentive.

MASTER (*to the doctor*) : " Look here ! Listen to what he is saying."

The doctor heard from M. about Sashi.

MASTER (*to the doctor, pointing to M.*) : " He instructs the school-boys."

DOCTOR : " So I have heard."

⁴ A sacred word by repeating which one attains perfection.

MASTER : " I am unlettered and yet educated people come here. How amazing ! You must admit that it is the play of God."

It was nine o'clock in the evening. The doctor had been sitting there since six o'clock, watching all these things.

GIRISH (*to the doctor*) : " Well, sir, does it ever happen to you that, though you do not intend to come here, you are drawn as if by a subtle force ? I feel that way ; that is why I am asking you."

DOCTOR : " I don't know whether I feel that. But the heart alone knows the promptings of the heart. (*To Sri Ramakrishna*) Besides, there isn't much use in speaking about it."

October 24, 1885

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the second floor of the house at Syampukur. Dr. Sarkar, Narendra, Mahimacharan, M., and other devotees were in the room. Referring to the homeopathic system of medicine, the Master said to Dr. Sarkar, " This treatment of yours is very good."

DOCTOR : " According to homeopathy the physician has to check up the symptoms of the disease with the medical book. It is like Western music. The singer follows the score.

" Where is Girish Ghosh ? Never mind. Don't trouble him. He didn't sleep last night."

MASTER : " Well, when I am in samadhi I feel intoxicated as if I were drunk with siddhi. What have you to say about that ? "

DOCTOR (*to M.*) : " In that state the nerve centres cease to function. Hence the limbs become numb. Again, the legs totter because all the energy rushes toward the brain. Life consists of the nervous system. There is a nerve centre in the nape of the neck called the medulla oblongata. If that is injured, one may die."

Mahima Chakravarty began to describe the Kundalini. He said : " The Sushumna nerve runs through the spinal cord in a subtle form. None can see it. That is what Siva says."

DOCTOR : " Siva examined man only in his maturity. But the Europeans have examined man in all stages of his life from the embryo to maturity. It is good to know comparative history. From the history of the Sonthals one learns that Kali was a Sonthal woman. She was a valiant fighter. (*All laugh.*)

" Don't laugh, please. Let me tell you how greatly the study of comparative anatomy has benefited men. The difference between the actions of the pancreatic juice and bile was at first unknown. But later Claude Bernard examined the stomach, liver, and other parts of the rabbit and demonstrated that the action of bile is different from the action of the pancreatic juice. Therefore it stands to reason that we should watch the lower animals as well. The study of man alone is not enough.

" Similarly, the study of comparative religion is highly beneficial.

" Why do his [meaning the Master's] words go straight to our hearts ? He has experienced the truths of different religions. He himself has practised



the disciplines of the Hindu, Christian, Mussalman, Sakta, and Vaishnava religions. The bees can make good honey only if they gather nectar from different flowers."

M. (to Dr. Sarkar) : "He (pointing to Mahimacharan) has studied science a great deal."

DOCTOR (smiling) : "What science ? Do you mean Max Muller's *Science of Religion* ?"

MAHIMA (to the Master) : "You are ill. But what can the doctor do about it ? When I heard of your illness, I thought that you were only going to pamper the doctor's pride."

MASTER (pointing to Dr. Sarkar) : "But he is a very good physician. He is very learned too."

MAHIMA : "Yes, sir. He is a ship and we are only small boats."

Dr. Sarkar folded his hands in humility.

MAHIMA : "But here in the Master's presence all are equal."

Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra to sing. Narendra sang :

I have made Thee, O Lord, the Pole-star of my life ;
No more shall I lose my way on the world's trackless sea. . . .

Then he sang :

Ever insane with pride am I, and many the cravings of my
heart ! . . .

He sang again :

This universe, wondrous and infinite,
O Lord, is Thy handiwork ;
And the whole world is a treasure-house
Full of Thy beauty and grace. . . .

Narendra continued :

O Father of the Universe, upon Thy lofty throne,
Thou dost enjoy the music of the worlds,
As Thy creation's praise they sweetly sing.
Behold, I too, though born of earth, have come with feeble voice
Before the portal of Thy House.

I seek alone Thy vision, Lord ! I crave no other boon.
Here I have come to sing my song for Thee ;
From a far corner of the mighty throng
Where sun and moon are hymning Thee, I too would sing Thy
praise :
This is Thy lowly servant's prayer.

He sang another song :

O King of Kings, reveal Thyself to me !
I crave Thy mercy. Cast on me Thy glance !
At Thy dear feet I dedicate my life,
Seared in the fiery furnace of this world.

My heart, alas, is deeply stained with sin ;
Ensnared in maya, I am all but dead.



Compassionate Lord ! Revive my fainting soul
With the life-giving nectar of Thy grace.

Again :

Be drunk, O mind, be drunk with the Wine of Heavenly Bliss !
Roll on the ground and weep, chanting Hari's sweet name ! . . .

MASTER : " And sing that one—' All that exists art Thou.' "

DOCTOR : " Ah ! "

Narendra sang :

I have joined my heart to Thee : all that exists art Thou ;
Thee only have I found, for Thou art all that exists. . . .

The singing was over. Dr. Sarkar sat there almost spellbound. After a time, with folded hands, he said very humbly to Sri Ramakrishna : " Allow me to take my leave now. I shall come again tomorrow."

MASTER : " Oh, stay a little. Girish Ghosh has been sent for. (*Pointing to Mahima*) He is a scholar, yet he dances in the name of Hari. He has no pride. He went to Konnagar just because we were there. He is wealthy ; he is free ; he serves nobody. (*Pointing to Narendra*) What do you think of him ? "

DOCTOR : " Excellent ! "

MASTER (*pointing to a devotee*) : " And him ? "

DOCTOR : " Splendid ! "

MAHIMA : " It can by no means be said that one knows philosophy unless one has read Hindu philosophy. The European philosophers do not know the twenty-four cosmic principles of the Samkhya philosophy. They cannot even grasp them."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " What are the three paths you speak of ? "

MAHIMA : " The path of Sat, which is the path of knowledge. Next, the path of Chit, of yoga, of karmayoga, which includes the duties and functions of the four stages of life. Last, the path of Ananda, the path of devotion and ecstatic love. You are an adept in all three paths ; you can speak of them all with authority."

Sri Ramakrishna laughed.

Dr. Sarkar took his leave. It was evening, the first night after the full moon. Sri Ramakrishna stood up, lost in samadhi. Nityagopal stood beside him in a reverent attitude.

Sri Ramakrishna took his seat. Nityagopal was stroking his feet. Devendra, Kalipada, and many other devotees were seated by his side.

MASTER (*to the devotees*) : " My mind tells me that Nityagopal's present state will undergo a change. His entire mind will be concentrated on me—on Him who dwells in me. Don't you see how Narendra's whole mind is being drawn toward me ? "

Many of the devotees were taking their leave. Sri Ramakrishna stood up. Referring to japa, he said to a devotee : " Japa means silently repeating God's name in solitude. When you chant His name with single-minded devotion you can see God's form and realize Him. Suppose there is a piece of



timber sunk in the water of the Ganges and fastened with a chain to the bank. You proceed link by link, holding to the chain, and you dive into the water and follow the chain. Finally you are able to reach the timber. In the same way, by repeating God's name you become absorbed in Him and finally realize Him."

KALIPADA (*smiling, to the devotees*): "Ours is a grand teacher! We are not asked to practise meditation, austerity, and other disciplines."

Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna said, "This is troubling me." The Master's throat was hurting him. Devendra said, "Your words cannot fool us any more." He thought that the Master feigned illness to hoodwink the devotees.

Most of the devotees departed. It was arranged that a few of the younger men should stay to nurse the Master by turns. M. also was going to spend the night there.

Sunday, October 25, 1885

It was about half past six in the morning when M. arrived at Syampukur and asked Sri Ramakrishna about his health. He was on his way to Dr. Sarkar to report the Master's condition. The Master said to M.: "Tell the doctor that during the early hours of the morning my mouth becomes filled with water and I cough. Also ask him if I may take a bath."

After seven o'clock M. came to Dr. Sarkar's house and told him about the Master's condition. The physician's old teacher and one or two friends were in the room. Dr. Sarkar said to his teacher, "Sir, I have been thinking of the Paramahansa⁵ since three in the morning. I couldn't sleep at all. Even now he is in my mind."

One of the doctor's friends said to him: "Sir, I hear that some speak of the Paramahansa as an Incarnation of God. You see him every day. How do you feel about it?"

DOCTOR: "I have the greatest regard for him as a man."

M. (*to the doctor's friend*): "It is very kind of Dr. Sarkar to treat him."

DOCTOR: "Kindness? What do you mean?"

M: "Not toward him, but toward us."

DOCTOR: "You see, you don't know my actual loss on account of the Paramahansa. Every day I fail to see two or three patients. When the next day I go to their houses, of my own accord, I cannot accept any fee since I am seeing them without being called. How can I charge them for my visit?"

The conversation turned to Mahima Chakravarty. He had been with the Master when Dr. Sarkar had visited him the previous Saturday. Pointing to the doctor, Mahima had said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Sir, you yourself have created this disease in order to pamper the doctor's pride."

M. (*to the doctor*): "Mahima Chakravarty used to come to your place to attend your lectures on medical science."

DOCTOR: "Is that so? How full of *tamas* he is! Didn't you notice it? I saluted him as 'God's Lower Third'. There exist in God *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Tamas* is the third and an inferior quality. Didn't you hear him say

⁵ Referring to Sri Ramakrishna.

to the Paramahansa, 'You yourself have created this disease in order to pamper the doctor's pride?' "

M : "Mahima Chakravarty believes that the Paramahansa can cure his disease himself, if he wants to."

DOCTOR : "What? Cure that disease himself? Is that possible? We are physicians; we know what cancer is. We ourselves cannot cure it. And he to cure himself! Why, he doesn't know anything about cancer. (*To his friends*) The illness is no doubt incurable, but these gentlemen have been nursing him with sincere devotion."

M. requested the doctor to visit Sri Ramakrishna and returned home.

In the afternoon, about three o'clock, M. came to the Master and repeated the conversation he had had with Dr. Sarkar. He said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Today the doctor embarrassed me."

MASTER : "What happened?"

M : "Yesterday he heard here that you yourself had created this illness in order to pamper the doctor's pride."

MASTER : "Who made that remark?"

M : "Mahima Chakravarty."

MASTER : "What did the doctor say to you?"

M : "He described Mahima Chakravarty as 'God's Lower Third'. Now he admits that all the qualities—sattva, rajas, and tamas—exist in God. (*The Master laughs.*) Then he told me that he had waked at three in the morning and had been thinking of you ever since. When I saw him it was eight o'clock. He said to me, 'Even now the Paramahansa is in my mind.'"

MASTER (*laughing*) : "You see, he has studied English. I cannot ask him to meditate on me; but he is doing it all the same, of his own accord."

M : "He also said about you, 'I have the greatest regard for him as a man.'"

MASTER : "Did you talk of anything else?"

M : "I asked him, 'What is your suggestion today about the patient?' He said : 'Suggestion? Hang it! I shall have to go to him again myself. What else shall I suggest?' (*Sri Ramakrishna laughs.*) Further he said : 'You don't know how much money I am losing every day. Every day I miss two or three calls.'"

There were many devotees, including Narendranath, in the room. Vijaykrishna Goswami arrived and respectfully took the dust of the Master's feet. Several Brahmo devotees came with him. Vijay had cut off his connection with the Brahmo Samaj and was practising spiritual discipline independently. Sri Ramakrishna was very fond of him on account of his piety and devotion. Though not a disciple of the Master, Vijay held him in very high respect. He had lived in Dacca a long time. Recently he had visited many sacred places in upper India.

MAHIMA CHAKRAVARTY (*to Vijay*) : "Sir, you have visited many holy places and new countries. Please tell us some of your experiences."



VIJAY : "What shall I say ? I realize that everything is here where we are sitting now. This roaming about is useless. At other places I have seen two, five, ten, or twenty-five per cent of him [meaning the Master], at the most. Here alone I find the full one hundred per cent manifestation of God."

MAHIMA : "You are right, sir. Again, it is he [the Master] who makes us roam about or remain in one place."

MASTER (*to Narendra*) : "See what a change has come over Vijay's mind. He is an altogether different person. He is like thick milk from which all the water has been boiled off. You see, I can recognize a paramahansa by his neck and forehead. Yes, I can recognize a paramahansa."

MAHIMA (*to Vijay*) : "Sir, you seem to eat less now. Isn't that so ?"

VIJAY : "Perhaps you are right. (*To the Master*) I heard about your illness and have come to see you. Again, in Dacca—"

MASTER : "What about Dacca ?"

Vijay did not reply and was silent a few moments.

VIJAY : "It is difficult to understand him [meaning the Master] unless he reveals himself. Here alone is the one hundred per cent manifestation of God."

MASTER : "Kedar said the other day, 'At other places we don't get anything to eat, but here we get a stomachful !'"

MAHIMA : "Why a stomachful ? It overflows the stomach."

VIJAY (*to the Master, with folded hands*) : "I have now realized who you are. You don't have to tell me."

MASTER (*in a state of ecstasy*) : "If so, then so be it !"

Saying, "Yes, I have understood", Vijay fell prostrate before the Master. He held the Master's feet on his chest and clung to them. The Master was in deep samadhi, motionless as a picture. The devotees were overwhelmed by this sight. Some burst into tears and some chanted sacred hymns. All eyes were riveted on Sri Ramakrishna. They viewed him in different ways, according to their spiritual unfoldment : some as a great devotee, some as a holy man, some as God Incarnate.

Mahimacharan sang, with tears in his eyes : "Behold, behold the embodiment of Love Divine !"

Now and then he chanted, as if enjoying a glimpse of Brahman :

The Transcendental, beyond the One and the many, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolûte.

Navagopal was weeping. Bhupati sang :

Hallowed be Brahman, the Absolute, the Infinite, the Fathomless !
Higher than the highest, deeper than the deepest depths !
Thou art the Light of Truth, the Fount of Love, the Home of Bliss !
This universe with all its manifold and blessed modes
Is but the enchanting poem of Thine inexhaustible thought ;
Its beauty overflows on every side.

O Thou Poet, great and primal, in the rhythm of Thy thought
The sun and moon arise and move toward their setting ;
The stars, shining like bits of gems, are the fair characters
In which Thy song is written across the blue expanse of sky ;

The year, with its six seasons, in tune with the happy earth,
Proclaims Thy glory to the end of time.

The colours of the flowers reveal Thy sovereign Beauty,
The waters in their stillness, Thy deep Serenity ;
The thunder-clap unveils to us the terror of Thy Law.
Deep is Thine Essence, truly ; how can a foolish mind perceive it ?
Wondering, it meditates on Thee from yuga to yuga's end ;
Millions upon millions of suns and moons and stars
Bow down to Thee, O Lord, in rapturous awe !

Beholding Thy creation, men and women weep for joy ;
The gods and angels worship Thee, O All-pervading Presence !
O Thou, the Fount of Goodness, bestow on us Thy Knowledge ;
Bestow on us devotion, bestow pure love and perfect peace ;
And grant us shelter at Thy hallowed feet !

Bhupati sang again :

Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness waves of ecstatic love arise :
Rapture divine ! Play of God's Bliss !
Oh, how enthralling ! . . .

He sang a third song :

Here vanish my fear and my delusion, my piety, rituals, and good works ;
Here vanish my pride of race and caste ! Where am I ? Where art Thou, O Hari ?
Thou hast stolen my life and soul, and now, O Friend, Thou dost desert me :
Ah, what a fool I was to come here to the shore of this Sea of Love !
Full to the brim with heavenly bliss is filled this little soul of mine ;
Premdas says : Harken, one and all ! This in truth is the way of God !

After a long time Sri Ramakrishna regained consciousness of the world.

MASTER (to M.) : "Something happens to me in that state of intoxication. Now I feel ashamed of myself. In that state I feel as if I were possessed by a ghost. I cease to be my own self. While coming down from that state I cannot count correctly. Trying to count, I say, 'One, seven, eight,' or some such thing."

NARENDRA : "It is because everything is one.

MASTER : "No, it is beyond one and two."

MAHIMA : "Yes, you are right. 'It is neither one nor two.'"

MASTER : "There reason withers away. God cannot be realized through scholarship. He is beyond the scriptures—the Vedas, Puranas, and Tantras. If I see a man with even one book in his hand, I call him a rajarshi,⁶ though he is a jnani. But the brahmarshi⁷ has no outer sign whatsoever.

"Do you know the use of the scriptures ? A man once wrote a letter to a relative, asking him to send five seers of sweetmeats and a piece of cloth.

⁶ A rishi, or seer, who appears with outer splendour, like a king.

⁷ A seer who always dwells in Brahman-Consciousness.



The relative received the letter, read it, and remembered about the sweetmeats and the cloth. Then he threw the letter away. Of what further use was it ? ”

VIJAY : “ I see that the sweetmeat has been sent.”

MASTER : “ God incarnates Himself on earth in a human body. He is, no doubt, present everywhere and in all beings, but man’s longing is not satisfied unless he sees God in a human form. Man’s need is not satisfied without the Divine Incarnation. Do you know what it is like ? By touching any part of a cow you undoubtedly touch the cow herself. Even by touching her horns you touch the cow. But the milk comes through the cow’s udder.”

MAHIMA : “ If a man wants milk he must put his mouth to the udder. What will he get by sucking the horns ? ” (*All laugh.*)

VIJAY : “ But a calf at first licks other parts of the cow.”

MASTER (*smiling*) : “ True. But seeing the calf doing so, someone perhaps puts its mouth to the udder.” (*All laugh.*)

The conversation was thus going on, when Dr. Sarkar came into the room and took a seat. He said to the Master : “ I woke up at three this morning, greatly worried that you might catch cold. Oh, I thought many other things about you.”

MASTER : “ I have been coughing and my throat is sore. In the small hours of the morning my mouth was filled with water. My whole body is aching.”

DOCTOR : “ Yes, I heard all about it this morning.”

Mahimacharan told of his trip to various parts of the country and said that in Ceylon no man laughed. Dr. Sarkar said, “ It may be so ; but I shall have to inquire about it.” (*All laugh.*)

The conversation turned to the duties of life.

MASTER (*to the doctor*) : “ Many think that the duty of a physician is a very noble one. The physician is undoubtedly a noble man if he treats his patients free, out of compassion and moved by their suffering. Then his work may be called very uplifting. But a physician becomes cruel and callous if he carries on his profession for money. It is very mean to do such things as examine urine and stool in order to earn money, like a business man carrying on his trade.”

DOCTOR : “ You are right. It is undoubtedly wrong for a physician to perform his duties in that spirit. But I don’t like to brag before you—”

MASTER : “ But the medical profession is certainly very noble if the physician devotes himself to the welfare of others in an unselfish spirit.

“ Whatever may be a householder’s profession, it is necessary for him to live in the company of holy men now and then. If a man loves God, he will himself seek the company of holy men. I give the illustration of the hemp-smoker. One hemp-smoker loves the company of another hemp-smoker. At the sight of a person who does not smoke, he goes away with downcast eyes or hides himself in a corner ; but his joy is unbounded if he meets a hemp addict. Perhaps they embrace each other. (*All laugh.*) Again, a vulture loves the company of another vulture.”

DOCTOR : “ It has also been noticed that a vulture runs away for fear of a crow. In my opinion one should serve all creatures, not men alone. Often I

feed the sparrows with flour. I throw small pellets of flour to them and they come in swarms. They love to eat them."

MASTER : " Bravo ! That's grand. Holy men should feed other creatures. They feed ants with sugar."

DOCTOR : " Will there be no singing today ? "

MASTER (to Narendra) : " Why don't you sing a little ? "

Narendra sang to the accompaniment of the tanpura and other instruments :

Sweet is Thy name, O Refuge of the humble !
It falls like sweetest nectar on our ears
And comforts us, Beloved of our souls !
The priceless treasure of Thy name alone
Is the abode of Immortality,
And he who chants Thy name becomes immortal.
Falling upon our ears, Thy holy name
Instantly slays the anguish of our hearts,
Thou Soul of our souls, and fills our hearts with bliss !

Narendra sang again :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !
What need have I of knowledge or reason ?
Make me drunk with Thy love's Wine ;
O Thou who stealest Thy bhaktas' hearts,
Drown me deep in the Sea of Thy love !
Here in this world, this madhouse of Thine,
Some laugh, some weep, some dance for joy :
Jesus, Buddha, Moses, Gauranga,
All are drunk with the Wine of Thy love.
O Mother, when shall I be blessed
By joining their blissful company ?

A strange transformation came over the devotees. They all became mad, as it were, with divine ecstasy. The pundit stood up, forgetting the pride of his scholarship, and cried :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !
What need have I of knowledge or reason ?

Vijay was the first on his feet, carried away by divine intoxication. Then Sri Ramakrishna stood up, forgetting all about his painful and fatal illness. The doctor, who had been sitting in front of him, also stood up. Both patient and physician forgot themselves in the spell created by Narendra's music. The younger Naren and Latu went into deep samadhi. The atmosphere of the room became electric. Everyone felt the presence of God. Dr. Sarkar, eminent scientist that he was, stood breathless, watching this strange scene. He noticed that the devotees who had gone into samadhi were utterly unconscious of the outer world. All were motionless and transfixed. After a while, as they came down a little to the plane of the relative world, some laughed and some wept. An outsider, entering the room, would have thought that a number of drunkards were assembled there.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna resumed his conversation, the devotees taking their seats. It was about eight o'clock in the evening.



MASTER : "You have just noticed the effect of divine ecstasy. What does your 'science' say about that? Do you think it is a mere hoax?"

DOCTOR (*to the Master*) : "I must say that this is all natural, when so many people have experienced it. It cannot be a hoax. (*To Narendra*) When you sang the lines :

O Mother, make me mad with Thy love !
What need have I of knowledge or reason ?

I could hardly control myself. I was about to jump to my feet. With great difficulty I suppressed my emotion. I said to myself, 'No, I must not display my feelings.'

MASTER (*with a smile, to the doctor*) : "You are unshakable and motionless, like Mount Sumeru. You are a very deep soul. Nobody could perceive the deep emotion of Rupa and Sanatana. If an elephant enters a small pool, there is a splashing of water on all sides. But this does not happen when it plunges into a big lake; hardly anyone notices it. Radha once said to her companion : 'Friend, you are weeping so much at our separation from Sri Krishna. But look at me. How stony my heart is ! There is not a tear in my eyes.' Brinde, her friend, replied : 'Yes, your eyes are dry. But there is a deep meaning in it. A fire of grief is constantly raging in your heart because of your separation from Krishna. No sooner do the tears gather in your eyes than they are dried up in the heat of that fire.'"

DOCTOR : "Nobody can beat you in talk !" (*Laughter.*)

The conversation turned to other things. Sri Ramakrishna described to the doctor his ecstasies at Dakshineswar. He also told him how to control anger, lust, and the other passions.

DOCTOR : "I have heard the story that you were once lying on the ground unconscious in samadhi when a wicked man kicked you with his boots."

MASTER : "You must have heard it from M. The man was Chandra Halder, a priest of the Kali temple at Kalighat; he often came to Mathur Babu's house. One day I was lying on the ground in an ecstatic mood. The room was dark. Chandra Halder thought I was feigning that state in order to win Mathur's favour. He entered the room and kicked me several times with his boots. It left black marks on my body. Everybody wanted to tell Mathur Babu about it, but I forbade them."

DOCTOR : "This is also due to the will of God. Thus you have taught people how to control anger and practise forgiveness."

In the mean time Vijay had become engaged in conversation with the other devotees.

VIJAY : "I feel as if someone were always moving with me. He shows me what is happening even at a distance."

NARENDRA : "Like a guardian angel."

VIJAY : "I have seen him [meaning the Master] in Dacca. I even touched his body."

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "It must have been someone else."

NARENDRA : "I too have seen him many a time. (*To Vijay*) How can I say I do not believe your words?"



SWAMI BRAHMANANDA (RAKHAL)



SWAMI YOGANANDA (JOGINDRA)



SWAMI NIRANJANANANDA
(NIRANJAN)



SWAMI PREMANANDA (BABURAM)



XLVII

THE MASTER'S TRAINING OF HIS DISCIPLES

Monday, October 26, 1885

IT WAS ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK in the morning when M. arrived at the Syampukur house on his way to Dr. Sarkar to report the Master's condition.

Dr. Sarkar had declared the illness incurable. His words cast gloom over the minds of the Master's devotees and disciples. With unflagging devotion and zeal they nursed the patient—their teacher, guide, philosopher, and friend. A band of young disciples, led by Narendra, was preparing to renounce the world and dedicate their lives to the realization of God and the service of humanity. People flocked to the Master day and night. In spite of the excruciating pain in his throat, he welcomed them all with a cheerful face. There seemed to be no limit to his solicitude for their welfare. His face beamed as he talked to them about God. Dr. Sarkar, seeing that conversation aggravated the illness, forbade him to talk to people. "You must not talk to others," the physician had said to the Master, "but you may make an exception in my case." The doctor used to spend six or seven hours in Sri Ramakrishna's company, drinking in every word that fell from his lips.

MASTER : "I am feeling much relieved. I am very well today. Is it because of the medicine ? Then why shouldn't I continue it ?"

M : "I am going to the doctor. I shall tell him everything. He will advise what is best."

MASTER : "I haven't seen Purna for two or three days. I am worried about him."

M. (to Kali) : "Why don't you see Purna and ask him to come ?"

KALI : "I shall go immediately."

MASTER (to M.) : "The doctor's son is a nice boy. Please ask him to come."

M. arrived at Dr. Sarkar's house and found him with two or three friends.

DOCTOR (to M.) : "I was talking about you just a minute ago. You said you would come at ten ; I have been waiting for you an hour and a half. Your delay has made me worry about him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna].

(To a friend) "Please sing that song."



The friend sang :

Proclaim the glory of God's name as long as life remains in you ;
The dazzling splendour of His radiance floods the universe !
Like nectar streams His boundless love, filling the hearts of men
with joy :
The very thought of His compassion sends a thrill through every
limb !
How can one fittingly describe Him ? Through His abounding grace
The bitter sorrows of this life are all forgotten instantly.

On every side—on land below, in sky above, beneath the seas :
In every region of this earth—men seek Him tirelessly,
And as they seek Him, ever ask : Where is His limit, Where His
end ?
True Wisdom's Dwelling-place is He, the Elixir of Eternal Life,
The Sleepless, Ever-wakeful Eye, the Pure and Stainless One :
The vision of His face removes all trace of sorrow from our hearts.

DOCTOR (*to M.*) : " Isn't it a beautiful song ? How do you like that
line ' Where is His limit, Where His end ? ' "

M : " Yes, that's a very fine line. It fills the mind with the idea of the
Infinite."

DOCTOR (*tenderly, to M.*) : " It is already late in the morning. Have you
taken your lunch ? I finish mine before ten and then begin my professional
calls ; otherwise I don't feel well. Look here, I have been thinking of giving a
feast to you all [meaning Sri Ramakrishna's devotees] one day."

M : " That will be fine, sir."

DOCTOR : " Where shall I arrange it ? Here or at the Syampukur house ?
Whatever you suggest."

M : " It doesn't matter, sir. Wherever you arrange it we shall be very
happy to dine with you."

The conversation turned to Kali, the Divine Mother.

DOCTOR : " Kali is an old hag of the Sonthals."

M. burst into loud laughter and said, " Where did you get that ? "

DOCTOR : " Oh, I have heard something like that." (*M. laughs.*)

They began to talk about the ecstasy that Vijay and the others had experienced the previous day in the Master's room. The doctor also had been present on the occasion.

DOCTOR : " Yes, I witnessed that ecstasy. But is excessive ecstasy good
for one ? "

M : " The Master says that an excess of ecstasy harms no one, if it is the
result of the contemplation of God. He further says that the lustre of a gem
gives light and soothes the body ; it does not burn."

DOCTOR : " Oh, the lustre of a gem ! That's only a reflected light."

M : " He also says that a man does not die by sinking in the Lake of
Immortality. God is that Lake. A plunge in that Lake does not injure a man ;
on the contrary it makes him immortal. Of course, he will become immortal only
if he has faith in God."

DOCTOR : " Yes, that is true."

The doctor took M. in his carriage. He had to see a few patients on the way to Syampukur. They continued their conversation in the carriage. Dr. Sarkar referred to Mahima Chakravarty's pride.

M : " He visits the Master. Even if he has a little pride, it will not last long. If one only sits in the Master's presence awhile, one's pride crumbles to pieces. It is because the Master himself is totally free from egotism. Pride cannot exist in the presence of humility. A celebrated man like Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar showed great modesty and humility in the Master's presence. The Paramahansa visited his house ; it was nine o'clock in the evening when the Master took his leave. Vidyasagar came all the way from the library to the gate of his compound to see him off. He himself carried the light to show the way. As the Master's carriage started off, Vidyasagar stood there with folded hands."

DOCTOR : " Well, what does Vidyasagar think of him ? "

M : " That day he showed the Master great respect. But when I talked with him later, I found out that he didn't much care for what the Vaishnavas call emotion or ecstasy. He shares your views on such things."

DOCTOR : " Neither do I care very much for any such display of emotion as folding one's hands or touching others' feet with one's head. To me the head is the same as the feet. But if a man thinks differently of the feet, let him do whatever he likes."

M : " We know that you do not care for a display of feelings. Perhaps you remember that the Master now and then refers to you as a ' deep soul '. He said to you yesterday that when an elephant plunges into a small pool it makes a big splash, but when it goes into a big lake you see hardly a ripple. The elephant of emotion cannot produce any effect at all in a deep soul. The Master says that you are a ' deep soul '."

DOCTOR : " I don't deserve the compliment. After all, what is bhava ? It is only a feeling. There are other aspects of feeling, such as bhakti. When it runs to excess, some can suppress it and some cannot."

M : " Divine ecstasy may or may not be explainable ; but, sir, it cannot be denied that ecstasy, or love of God, is a unique thing. I have seen in your library Stebbing's book on Darwinism. According to Stebbing the human mind is wonderful, whether it be the result of evolution or of special creation. He gives a beautiful illustration from the theory of light. Light is wonderful, whether you know the wave theory of light or not."

DOCTOR : " Yes. Have you noticed further that Stebbing accepts both Darwin and God ? "

The conversation again turned to Sri Ramakrishna.

DOCTOR : " I find that he is a worshipper of the Goddess Kali."

M : " But with him the meaning of Kali is different. What the Vedas call the Supreme Brahman, he calls Kali. What the Mussalmans call Allah and the Christians call God, he calls Kali. He does not see many gods ; he sees only one God. What the Brahmajnanis of olden times called Brahman, what the yogis call Atman and the bhaktas call the Bhagavan, he calls Kali."

"In Sri Ramakrishna one finds all the attitudes and ideals of religion. That is why people of all sects and creeds enjoy peace and blessedness in his presence. Who can fathom his feeling and tell us the depth of his inner experience?"

DOCTOR: "'All things to all men.' I don't approve of it although St. Paul says it."

M: "Who can understand the state of his mind? We have heard from him that unless one is engaged in the yarn trade, one cannot tell the difference between number forty and number forty-one yarn. Only a painter can appreciate another painter. The mind of a saint is very deep. One cannot understand all the aspects of Christ unless one is Christlike. Perhaps the deep realization of the Master is what Christ meant when He said: 'Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.'"

DOCTOR: "What arrangements have you made about having him nursed?"

M: "At present one of the older devotees is assigned every day to look after him. It may be Girish Babu or Ram Babu or Balaram or Suresh Babu or Navagopal or Kali Babu. It is that way."

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon when the doctor and M. entered the Master's room on the second floor. Sri Ramakrishna sat there, smiling as usual, completely forgetful of the fatal illness which was eating his life away. Among the many devotees in the room were Girish, the younger Naren, and Sarat. Sometimes they were motionless, like the snake before its charmer, and sometimes they displayed great joy, like the bridal party with the bridegroom. The doctor and M. bowed low before the Master and sat on the floor. At the sight of the doctor, the Master said, laughing, "Today I have been feeling very well."

Then the Master went on with his soul-enthraling conversation.

MASTER: "What will mere scholarship accomplish without discrimination and renunciation? I go into a strange mood while thinking of the Lotus Feet of God. The cloth on my body drops to the ground and I feel something creeping up from my feet to the top of my head. In that state I regard all as mere straw. If I see a pundit without discrimination and love of God, I regard him as a bit of straw."

"One day Dr. Ramnarayan had been arguing with me, when suddenly I went into that mood. I said to him: 'What are you saying? What can you understand of God by reasoning? How little you can understand of His creation! Shame! You have the pettifogging mind of a weaver!' Seeing the state of my mind he began to weep, and gently stroked my feet."

DOCTOR: "Ramnarayan did that because he is a Hindu. Besides, he is a believer in flowers and sandal-paste. He is an orthodox Hindu."

M. (to himself): "Dr. Sarkar says that he has nothing to do with gong and conch-shells!"¹

MASTER: "Bankim² is one of your pundits. I met him once. I asked him, 'What is the duty of man?' And he had the impudence to say, 'Eating,

¹ These are used by the Hindus in the temple for worshipping the Deity.

² Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the celebrated writer of Bengal.

sleeping, and sex gratification.' These words created in me a feeling of great aversion. I said: 'What are you saying? You are very mean. What you think day and night and what you do all the time come out through your lips. If a man eats radish, he belches radish.' Then we talked about God a great deal. There was also much devotional music in the room, and I danced. Then Bankim said to me, 'Sir, please come to our house once.' 'That depends on the will of God', I replied. 'There also', he said, 'you will find devotees of God.' I laughed and said: 'What kind of devotees are they? Are they like those who said, "Gopal! Gopal!"?' "

DOCTOR: "What is the story of 'Gopal! Gopal!'?"

MASTER (*with a smile*): "There was a goldsmith who kept a jewelry shop. He looked like a great devotee, a true Vaishnava, with beads around his neck, rosary in his hand, and the holy marks on his forehead. Naturally people trusted him and came to his shop on business. They thought that, being such a pious man, he would never cheat them. Whenever a party of customers entered the shop, they would hear one of his craftsmen say, 'Kesava! Kesava!' Another would say, after a while, 'Gopal! Gopal!' Then a third would mutter, 'Hari! Hari!' Finally someone would say, 'Hara! Hara!' Now these are, as you know, different names of God. Hearing so much chanting of God's names, the customers naturally thought that this goldsmith must be a very superior person. But can you guess the goldsmith's true intention? The man who said 'Kesava! Kesava!'³ meant to ask, 'Who are these?—who are these customers?' The man who said 'Gopal! Gopal' conveyed the idea that the customers were merely a herd of cows. That was the estimate he formed of them after the exchange of a few words. The man who said 'Hari! Hari!' asked, 'Since they are no better than a herd of cows, then may we rob them?' He who said 'Hara! Hara!' gave his assent, meaning by these words, 'Do rob by all means, since they are mere cows!' (*All laugh.*)

"Once I went to a certain place with Mathur Babu. Many pundits came forward to argue with me. And you all know that I am a fool. (*All laugh.*) The pundits saw that strange mood of mine. When the conversation was over, they said to me: 'Sir, after hearing your words, all that we have studied before, our knowledge and scholarship, has proved to be mere spittle. Now we realize that a man does not lack wisdom if he has the grace of God. The fool becomes wise and the mute eloquent.' Therefore I say that a man does not become a scholar by the mere study of books.

"Yes, how true it is! How can a man who has the grace of God lack knowledge? Look at me. I am a fool. I do not know anything. Then who is it that utters these words? The reservoir of the Knowledge of God is inexhaustible. There are grain-dealers at Kamarpukur. When selling paddy, one man weighs the grain on the scales and another man pushes it to him from a heap. It is the duty of the second man to keep a constant supply of grain on the scales by pushing it from the big heap. It is the same with my words. No

³ These names of God have a double meaning in Bengali. The second meaning of each word is given in italics.



sooner are they about to run short than the Divine Mother sends a new supply from Her inexhaustible storehouse of Knowledge.

"During my boyhood God manifested Himself in me. I was then eleven years old. One day, while I was walking across a paddy-field, I saw something. Later on I came to know from people that I had been unconscious, and my body totally motionless. Since that day I have been an altogether different man. I began to see another person within me. When I used to conduct the worship in the temple, my hand, instead of going toward the Deity, would very often come toward my head, and I would put flowers there. A young man who was then staying with me did not dare approach me. He would say : 'I see a light on your face. I am afraid to come very near you.'

"You know I am a fool. I know nothing. Then who is it that says all these things ? I say to the Divine Mother : 'O Mother, I am the machine and Thou art the Operator. I am the house and Thou art the Indweller. I am the chariot and Thou art the Charioteer. I do as Thou makest me do ; I speak as Thou makest me speak ; I move as Thou makest me move. It is not I ! It is not I ! It is all Thou ! It is all Thou !' Hers is the glory ; we are only Her instruments. Once Radha, to prove her chastity, carried on her head a pitcher filled with water. The pitcher had a thousand holes, but not a drop of water spilled. People began to praise her, saying, 'Such a chaste woman the world will never see again !' Then Radha said to them : 'Why do you praise me ? Say "Glory unto Krishna ! Hail Krishna !" I am only His handmaid.'

"Once in that strange mood of mine I placed my foot on Vijay's chest. You know how greatly I respect him—and I placed my foot on his body ! What do you say to that ?"

DOCTOR : "But now you should be careful."

MASTER (*with folded hands*) : "What can I do ? I become completely unconscious in that mood. Then I do not know at all what I am doing."

DOCTOR : "You should be careful. No use folding your hands now and expressing regret !"

MASTER : "Can I do anything *myself* in that mood ? What do you think of this state ? If you think it is a hoax, then I should say that your study of 'science' and all that is bosh !"

DOCTOR : "Now listen, sir ! Would I come to see you so often if I thought it all a hoax ? You know that I neglect many other duties in order to come here. I cannot visit many patients, for I spend six or seven hours at a stretch here."

MASTER : "Once I said to Mathur Babu : 'Don't think that I have achieved my desired end because you, a rich man, show me respect. It matters very little to me whether you obey me or not.' Of course you must remember that a mere man can do nothing. It is God alone who makes one person obey another. Man is straw and dust before the power of God."

DOCTOR : "Do you think I shall obey you because a certain fisherman⁴ obeyed you ? ... Undoubtedly I show you respect ; I show you respect as a man."

MASTER : "Do I ask you to show me respect ?"

⁴ Alluding to Mathur Babu, who belonged to the low caste of the fishermen.

GIRISH : " Does he ask you to show him respect ? "

DOCTOR (*to the Master*) : " What are you saying ? Do you explain it as the will of God ? "

MASTER : " What else can it be ? What can a man do before the will of God ? Arjuna said to Sri Krishna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra : ' I will not fight. It is impossible for me to kill my own kinsmen.' Sri Krishna replied : ' Arjuna, you will have to fight. Your very nature will make you fight.' Then Sri Krishna revealed to Arjuna that all the men on the battlefield were already dead."

" Once some Sikhs came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. They said : ' You see, the leaves of the aswattha tree are moving. That too is due to the will of God.' Without His will not even a leaf can move."

DOCTOR : " If everything is done by the will of God, then why do you chatter ? Why do you talk so much to bring knowledge to others ? "

MASTER : " He makes me talk ; therefore I talk. ' I am the machine and He is the Operator.' "

DOCTOR : " You say that you are the machine. That's all right. Or keep quiet, knowing that everything is God."

GIRISH (*to the doctor*) : " Whatever you may think, sir, the truth is that we act because He makes us act. Can anyone take a single step against the Almighty Will ? "

DOCTOR : " But God has also given us free will. I can think of God, or not, as I like."

GIRISH : " You think of God or do some good work because you like to. Really it is not you who do these things, but your liking of them that makes you do so."

DOCTOR : " Why should that be so ? I do these things as my duty."

GIRISH : " Even then it is because you like to do your duty."

DOCTOR : " Suppose a child is being burnt. From a sense of duty I rush to save it."

GIRISH : " You feel happy to save the child ; therefore you rush into the fire. It is your happiness that drives you to the action. A man eats opium being tempted by such relishes as puffed rice or fried potatoes." (*Laughter.*)

MASTER : " A man must have some kind of faith before he undertakes a work. Further, he feels joy when he thinks of it. Only then does he set about performing the work. Suppose a jar of gold coins is hidden underground. First of all a man must have faith that the jar of gold coins is there. He feels joy at the thought of the jar. Then he begins to dig. As he removes the earth he hears a metallic sound. That increases his joy. Next he sees a corner of the jar. That gives him more joy. Thus his joy is ever on the increase. Standing on the porch of the Kali temple, I have watched the ascetics preparing their smoke of hemp. I have seen their faces beaming with joy in anticipation of the smoke."

DOCTOR : " But take the case of fire. It gives both heat and light. The light no doubt illumines objects, but the heat burns the body. Likewise, it is

³ Reference to the eleventh chapter of the *Gita*.



not an unadulterated joy that one reaps from the performance of duty. Duty has its painful side too."

M. (to Girish) : "As the proverb goes : 'If the stomach gets food, then the back can bear a few blows from the host.' There is joy in sorrow also."

GIRISH (to the doctor) : "Duty is dry."

DOCTOR : "Why so ?"

GIRISH : "Then it is pleasant." (*All laugh.*)

M : "Again we come to the point that one likes opium for the sake of the relishes that are served with it."

GIRISH (to the doctor) : "Duty must be pleasant ; or why do you perform it ?"

DOCTOR : "The mind is inclined that way."

M. (to Girish) : "That wretched inclination draws the mind. If you speak of the compelling power of inclination, then where is free will ?"

DOCTOR : "I do not say that the will is absolutely free. Suppose a cow is tied with a rope. She is free within the length of that rope. But when she feels the pull of the rope—"

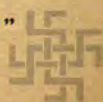
MASTER : "Jadu Mallick also gave that illustration. (*To the younger Naren*) Is it mentioned in some English book ?

(*To the doctor*) "Look here. If a man truly believes that God alone does everything, that He is the Operator and man the machine, then such a man is verily liberated in life. 'Thou workest Thine own work ; men only call it theirs.' Do you know what it is like ? Vedanta philosophy gives an illustration. Suppose you are cooking rice in a pot, with potato, egg-plant, and other vegetables. After a while the potatoes, egg-plant, rice, and the rest begin to jump about in the pot. They seem to say with pride : 'We are moving ! We are jumping !' The children see it and think the potatoes, egg-plant, and rice are alive and so they jump that way. But the elders, who know, explain to the children that the vegetables and the rice are not alive ; they jump not of themselves, but because of the fire under the pot ; if you remove the burning wood from the hearth, then they will move no more. Likewise the pride of man, that he is the doer, springs from ignorance. Men are powerful because of the power of God. All becomes quiet when that burning wood is taken away. The puppets dance well on the stage when pulled by a wire, but they cannot move when the wire snaps.

"A man will cherish the illusion that he is the doer as long as he has not seen God, as long as he has not touched the Philosopher's Stone. So long will he know the distinction between his good and bad actions. This awareness of distinction is due to God's maya ; and it is necessary for the purpose of running His illusory world. But a man can realize God if he takes shelter under His vidyamaya and follows the path of righteousness. He who knows God and realizes Him is able to go beyond maya. He who firmly believes that God alone is the Doer and he himself a mere instrument is a jivanmukta, a free soul though living in a body. I said this to Keshab Chandra Sen."

GIRISH (to the doctor) : "How do you know that free will exists ?"

DOCTOR : "Not by reasoning ; I feel it."



GIRISH : " In that case I may say that I and others feel the reverse. We feel that we are controlled by another." (*All laugh.*)

DOCTOR : " There are two elements in duty : first, the ' oughtness ' of a duty ; second, the happiness, which comes as an after-effect. But at the initial stage this happiness is not the impelling motive. I noticed in my childhood the great worry of the priest at the sight of ants in the sweets offered before the Deity. He did not, at the outset, feel joy at the thought of the sweets. First of all he worried about them."

M. (*to himself*) : " It is difficult to say whether one feels happiness while performing the duty or afterwards. Where is the free will of a man if he performs an action, being impelled by a feeling of happiness ? "

MASTER : " What the doctor is speaking of is called love without any selfish motive. I do not want anything from Dr. Mahendra Sarkar ; I do not need anything from him, but still I love to see him. This is love for love's sake. But suppose I get a little joy from it ; how can I help it ?

" Ahalya once said to Rama : ' O Rama, I have no objection to being born even as a pig. But please grant that I may have pure love for Thy Lotus Feet. I do not want anything else.'

" Narada went to Ayodhya to remind Rama that He was to kill Ravana. At the sight of Rama and Sita, he began to sing their glories. Gratified at Narada's devotion, Rama said : ' Narada, I am pleased with your prayer. Ask a boon.' Narada replied, ' O Rama, if Thou must give me a boon, then grant that I may have pure love for Thy Lotus Feet and that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya.' Rama said, ' Ask something more.' ' No, Rama,' answered Narada, ' I do not want anything else. I want only pure love for Thy Lotus Feet, a love that seeks no return.'

" That is Dr. Sarkar's attitude. It is like seeking God alone, and not asking Him for wealth, fame, bodily comforts, or anything else. This is called pure love.

" There is an element of joy in it, no doubt ; but it is not a worldly joy ; it is the joy of bhakti and prema, devotion to God and ecstatic love of Him. I used to go to Sambhu Mallick's house. Once he said to me : ' You come here frequently. Yes, you come because you feel happy talking with me.' Yes, there is that element of happiness.

" But there is a state higher than this. When a man attains it, he moves about aimlessly, like a child. As the child goes along, perhaps he sees a grasshopper and catches it. The man of that exalted mood, too, has no definite aim.

(*To the devotees*) " Don't you understand the doctor's inner feeling ? It is the prayer of a devotee to God for right purpose, that he may have no inclination for evil things.

" I too passed through that state. It is called dasya, the attitude of the servant toward his master. I used to weep so bitterly with the name of the Divine Mother on my lips that people would stand in a row watching me. When I was passing through that state, someone, in order to test me and also to cure my madness, brought a prostitute into my room. She was beautiful to look at, with pretty eyes. I cried, ' O Mother ! O Mother ! ' and rushed out of the



room. I ran to Haladhari and said to him, 'Brother, come and see who has entered my room!' I told Haladhari and everyone else about this woman. While in that state I used to weep with the name of the Mother on my lips. Weeping, I said to Her: 'O Mother, protect me! Please make me stainless. Please see that my mind is not diverted from the Real to the unreal.' (*To the doctor*) This attitude of yours is also very good. It is the attitude of a devotee, one who looks on God as his Master.

"When a man develops pure sattva, he thinks only of God. He does not enjoy anything else. Some are born with pure sattva as a result of their prarabdha karma. Through unselfish action one finally acquires pure sattva. Sattva mixed with rajas diverts the mind to various objects. From it springs the conceit of doing good to the world. To do good to the world is extremely difficult for such an insignificant creature as man. But there is no harm in doing good to others in an unselfish spirit. This is called unselfish action. It is highly beneficial for a person to try to perform such action. But by no means all succeed, for it is very difficult. Everyone must work. Only one or two can renounce action. Rarely do you find a man who has developed pure sattva. Through disinterested action sattva mixed with rajas gradually turns into pure sattva.

"No sooner does a man develop pure sattva than he realizes God, through His grace.

"Ordinary people cannot understand pure sattva. Hem once said to me: 'Well, priest! The goal of a man's life is to acquire name and fame in the world. Isn't that true?'"

Tuesday, October 27, 1885

Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room. Narendra and other devotees were with him. The Master was conversing with them. It was about ten o'clock in the morning.

NARENDRA: "How strangely the doctor behaved yesterday!"

A DEVOTEE: "Yes, the fish swallowed the hook but the line broke."

MASTER (*smiling*): "But the hook is in its mouth. It will die and float on the water."

Narendra went out for a few minutes. Sri Ramakrishna was talking to M. about Purna.

MASTER: "The devotee looking on himself as Prakriti likes to embrace and kiss God, whom he regards as the Purusha. I am telling this just to you. Ordinary people should not hear these things."

M: "God sports in various ways. Even this illness of yours is one of His sports. Because you are ill new devotees are coming to you."

MASTER (*smiling*): "Bhupati says, 'What would people have thought of you if you had just rented a house to live in, without being ill?' Well, what has happened to the doctor?"

M: "As regards God he accepts for himself the attitude of a servant. He says, 'Thou art the Master and I am Thy servant.' But then he asks me, 'Why do you apply the idea of God to a man?'"

MASTER : " Just see ! Are you going to him today ? "

M : " I shall see him if it is necessary to report your condition. "

MASTER : " How do you find this boy Bankim ? If he cannot come here you may give him instruction. That will awaken his spiritual consciousness. "

Narendra entered the room and sat near Sri Ramakrishna. Since the death of his father he had been very much worried about the family's financial condition. He now had to support his mother and brothers. Besides, he was preparing himself for his law examination. Lately he had served as a teacher in the Vidyasagar School at Bowbazar. He wanted to make some arrangement for his family and thus get rid of all his worries. Sri Ramakrishna knew all this. He looked affectionately at Narendra.

MASTER (to M.) : " Well, I said to Keshab, ' One should be satisfied with what comes unsought. ' The son of an aristocrat does not worry about his food and drink. He gets his monthly allowance. Narendra, too, belongs to a high plane. Then why is he in such straitened circumstances ? God certainly provides everything for the man who totally surrenders himself to Him. "

M : " Narendra, too, will be provided for. It is not yet too late for him. "

MASTER : " But a man who feels intense renunciation within doesn't calculate that way. He doesn't say to himself, ' I shall first make an arrangement for the family and then practise sadhana. ' No, he doesn't feel that way if he has developed intense dispassion. A goswami said in the course of his preaching, ' If a man has ten thousand rupees he can maintain himself on the income ; then, free from worries, he can pray to God. '

" Keshab Sen also said something like that. He said to me : ' Sir, suppose a man wants, first of all, to make a suitable arrangement of his property and estate and then think of God ; will it be all right for him to do so ? Is there anything wrong about it ? ' I said to him : ' When a man feels utter dispassion, he looks on the world as a deep well and his relatives as venomous cobras. Then he cannot think of saving money or making arrangements about his property. ' God alone is real and all else illusory. To think of the world instead of God !

" A woman was stricken with intense grief. She first tied her nose-ring in the corner of her cloth and then dropped to the ground, saying, ' Oh, friends, what a calamity has befallen me ! ' But she was very careful not to break the nose-ring. "

All laughed. At these words Narendra felt as if struck by an arrow, and lay down on the floor. M. understood what was going through Narendra's mind and said with a smile : " What's the matter ? Why are you lying down ? "

The Master said to M., with a smile : " You remind me of a woman who felt ashamed of herself for sleeping with her brother-in-law and couldn't understand the conduct of those women who lived as mistresses of strangers. By way of excusing herself she said : ' After all, a brother-in-law is one's own. But even that kills me with shame. And how do these women dare to live with strangers ? ' "

M. himself had been leading a worldly life. Instead of being ashamed of his own conduct, he smiled at Narendra. That was why Sri Ramakrishna



referred to the woman who criticized the conduct of immoral women, though she herself had illicit love for her brother-in-law.

A Vaishnava minstrel was singing downstairs. Sri Ramakrishna was pleased with his song and said that someone should give him a little money. A devotee went downstairs. The Master asked, "How much did he give the singer?" When he was told that the devotee had given only two pice, he said: "Just that much? This money is the fruit of his servitude. How much he had to flatter his master and suffer to earn it! I thought he would give at least four annas."

The younger Naren had promised to show Sri Ramakrishna the nature of electricity with an instrument. The instrument was exhibited.

It was about two o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees were sitting in the room. Atul brought with him a friend who was a munsiff. Bagchi, the famous painter from Shikdarpara, arrived. He presented the Master with several paintings. Sri Ramakrishna examined the pictures with great delight.

Bagchi had long hair like a woman's. Sri Ramakrishna said: "Many days ago a sannyasi came to Dakshineswar who had hair nine cubits long. He used to chant the name of Radha. He was genuine."

A few minutes later Narendra began to sing. The songs were full of the spirit of renunciation. He sang:

O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain?
Down the path of hope I gaze with longing, day and night. . . .

He sang again:

O Mother, Thou my inner Guide, ever awake within my heart;
Day and night Thou holdest me in Thy lap.
Why dost Thou show such tenderness to this unworthy child of
Thine? . . .

Then he sang:

O gracious Lord, if like a bee
My soul cannot imbed itself
Deep in the Lotus of Thy Feet,
What comfort can I find in life?
What can I gain with wealth untold,
Neglecting Thee, supremest Wealth?

I take no pleasure in the sight
Of the most lovely infant's face,
If all its loveliness reveals
No trace of Thy dear features there.
Moonlight is meaningless to me
As darkest night, if Thy love's moon
Rise not in my soul's firmament.
The purest wife's unspotted love
Is stained, if in it is not set
The priceless gem of love divine.



O Lord, whenever doubt of Thee,
 Born of base error and neglect,
 Assails my mind, I writhe in pain
 As from a serpent's poisonous fangs !
 What more, O Master, shall I say ?
 Thou art my heart's most precious Jewel,
 The Home of Everlasting Joy.

It was half past five in the afternoon when Dr. Sarkar came to the Master's room at Syampukur, felt his pulse, and prescribed the necessary medicine. Many devotees were present, including Narendra, Girish, Dr. Dukari, the younger Naren, Rakhal, M., Sarat, and Shyam Basu.

Dr. Sarkar talked a little about the Master's illness and watched him take the first dose of medicine. Then Sri Ramakrishna began to talk to Shyam Basu. Dr. Sarkar started to leave, saying, "Now that you are talking to Shyam Basu, I shall say good-bye to you."

The Master and a devotee asked the doctor if he would like to hear some songs.

DR. SARKAR (*to the Master*): "I should like it very much. But music makes you frisk about like a kid and cut all sorts of capers. You must suppress your emotion."

Dr. Sarkar took his seat once more, and Narendra began to sing in his sweet voice, to the accompaniment of the tanpura and mridanga :

This universe, wondrous and infinite,
 O Lord, is Thy handiwork ;
 And the whole world is a treasure-house
 Full of Thy beauty and grace. . . .

He sang again :

In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;
 Therefore the yogis meditate in a dark mountain cave.
 In the lap of boundless dark, on Mahanirvana's waves upborne,
 Peace flows serene and inexhaustible.
 Taking the form of the Void, in the robe of darkness wrapped,
 Who art Thou, Mother, seated alone in the shrine of samadhi ?
 From the Lotus of Thy fear-scattering Feet flash Thy love's
 lightnings ;
 Thy Spirit-Face shines forth with laughter terrible and loud !

Dr. Sarkar said to M., "This song is dangerous for him." Sri Ramakrishna asked M. what the doctor had said. M. replied, "The doctor is afraid that this song may throw your mind into samadhi."

In the mean time the Master had partially lost consciousness of the outer world. Looking at the physician, he said with folded hands : "No, no. Why should I go into samadhi ?" Hardly had he spoken these words when he went into a deep ecstasy. His body became motionless, his eyes fixed, his tongue speechless. He sat there like a statue cut in stone, completely unconscious of the outer world. Turned inward were his mind, ego, and all the other organs of perception. He seemed an altogether different person.

Narendra continued his songs, pouring his entire heart and soul into them :

What matchless beauty ! What a bewitching Face I behold !
 The Sovereign of my soul has entered my lowly hut ;
 The springs of my love are welling forth on every side.
 Tell me, my Beloved ! O Thou, the Lord of my heart !
 What treasure shall I lay before Thy Lotus Feet ?
 Take Thou my life, my soul ; what more can I offer Thee ?
 Take everything that is mine. Deign to accept my all.

Narendra continued :

O gracious Lord, if like a bee
 My soul cannot imbed itself
 Deep in the Lotus of Thy Feet,
 What comfort can I find in life ? . . .

As the doctor heard the words, " The purest wife's unspotted love ", his eyes were filled with tears. He cried out, " Ah me ! Ah me ! "

Narendra sang again :

Oh, when will dawn the blessed day
 When Love will waken in my heart ?
 When will my tears flow uncontrolled
 As I repeat Lord Hari's name,
 And all my longing be fulfilled ? . . .

In the midst of the singing Sri Ramakrishna had regained consciousness of the outer world. When Narendra finished the song, the Master continued his conversation, keeping them all spellbound. The devotees looked at his face in wonder. It did not show the slightest trace of the agonizing pain of his illness. The face shone with heavenly joy.

Addressing the doctor, the Master said : " Give up this false modesty. Why should you feel shy about singing the name of God ? The proverb says very truly : ' One cannot realize God if one is a victim of shame, hatred, or fear.' Give up such foolish notions as : ' I am such a great man ! Shall I dance crying the name of God ? What will other great men think of me on hearing of this ? They may say that the doctor, poor fellow, has been dancing uttering the name of Hari, and thus pity me.' Give up all these foolish notions."

DOCTOR : " I never bother about what people say. I don't care a straw about their opinions."

MASTER : " Yes, I know of your strong feeling about that. (*All laugh.*)

" Go beyond knowledge and ignorance ; only then can you realize God. To know many things is ignorance. Pride of scholarship is also ignorance. The unwavering conviction that God alone dwells in all beings is jnana, knowledge. To know Him intimately is vijñana, a richer Knowledge. If a thorn gets into your foot, a second thorn is needed to take it out. When it is out both thorns are thrown away. You have to procure the thorn of knowledge to remove the thorn of ignorance ; then you must set aside both knowledge and ignorance. God is beyond both knowledge and ignorance. Once Lakshmana said to Rama, ' Brother, how amazing it is that such a wise man as Vasishtha wept bitterly at the death of his sons ! ' Rama said : ' Brother, he

who has knowledge must also have ignorance. He who has knowledge of one thing must also have knowledge of many things. He who is aware of light is also aware of darkness.' Brahman is beyond knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice, merit and demerit, cleanliness and uncleanness."

Sri Ramakrishna then recited the following song of Ramprasad :

Come, let us go for a walk, O mind, to Kali, the Wish-fulfilling
Tree,
And there beneath It gather the four fruits of life. . . .

When will you learn to lie, O mind, in the abode of Blessedness,
With Cleanliness and Defilement on either side of you ?
Only when you have found the way
To keep your wives contentedly under a single roof,
Will you behold the matchless form of Mother Syama. . . .

SHYAM BASU : " Sir, what remains after one throws away both thorns ? "

MASTER : " *Nityasuddhabodharupam*—the Eternal and Ever-pure Consciousness. How can I make it clear to you ? Suppose a man who has never tasted ghee asks you, ' What does ghee taste like ? ' Now, how can you explain that to him ? At the most you can say : ' What is ghee like ? It is just like ghee ! ' A young girl asked her friend : ' Well, friend, your husband is here. What sort of pleasure do you enjoy with him ? ' The friend answered : ' My dear, you will know it for yourself when you get a husband. How can I explain it to you ? '

" It is said in the Purana that Bhagavati, the Divine Mother, was once born as the daughter of King Himalaya. After Her birth She showed Her father Her many forms. The Lord of the mountains, after enjoying all these visions, said to the Divine Mother, ' May I have the vision of Brahman as It is described in the Vedas ! ' Then the Divine Mother answered, ' Father, if you want to have the vision of Brahman you must live in the company of holy men. '

" What Brahman is cannot be described in words. Somebody once said that everything in the world has been made impure, like food that has touched the tongue, and that Brahman alone remains undefiled. The meaning is this : All scriptures and holy books—the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, and so forth—may be said to have been defiled because their contents have been uttered by the tongues of men ; but what Brahman is no tongue has yet been able to describe. Therefore Brahman is still undefiled. One cannot describe in words the joy of play and communion with Satchidananda. He alone knows, who has realized it."

Addressing Dr. Sarkar, Sri Ramakrishna continued : " Look here. One cannot attain Knowledge unless one is free from egotism. There is a saying :

When shall I be free ?
When ' I ' shall cease to be.

' I ' and ' mine '—that is ignorance. ' Thou ' and ' Thine '—that is Knowledge. A true devotee says : ' O God, Thou alone art the Doer ; Thou alone doest all. I am a mere instrument ; I do as Thou makest me do. All these—wealth, possessions, nay, the universe itself—belong to Thee. This house and

these relatives are Thine alone, not mine. I am Thy servant ; mine is only the right to serve Thee according to Thy bidding."

"Those who have read a few books cannot get rid of conceit. Once I had a talk with Kalikrishna Tagore about God. At once he said, 'I know all about that.' I said to him : 'Does a man who has visited Delhi brag about it ? Does a gentleman go about telling everyone that he is a gentleman ?'"

SHYAM : "But Kalikrishna Tagore has great respect for you."

MASTER : "Oh, how vanity turns a person's head ! There was a scavenger woman in the temple garden at Dakshineswar. And her pride ! And all because of a few ornaments. One day a few men were passing her on the path and she shouted to them, 'Hey ! Get out of the way, you people !' If a scavenger woman could talk that way, what can one say about the vanity of others ?"

SHYAM : "Sir, if God alone does everything, how is it that man is punished for his sins ?"

MASTER : "How like a goldsmith you talk !"

NARENDRA : "In other words, Shyam Babu has a calculating mind, like a goldsmith, who weighs things with his delicate balance."

MASTER : "I say : O my foolish boy, eat the mangoes and be happy. What is the use of your calculating how many hundreds of trees, how many thousands of branches, and how many millions of leaves there are in the orchard ? You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Eat them and be contented."

(To Shyam) "You have been born in this world as a human being to worship God ; therefore try to acquire love for His Lotus Feet. Why do you trouble yourself to know a hundred other things ? What will you gain by discussing 'philosophy' ? Look here, one ounce of liquor is enough to intoxicate you. What is the use of your trying to find out how many gallons of liquor there are in the tavern ?"

DOCTOR : "Quite so. And what is more, the Wine in God's Tavern is beyond all measure. There is no limit to it."

MASTER (to Shyam) : "Why don't you give your power of attorney to God ? Rest all your responsibilities on Him. If you entrust an honest man with your responsibilities, will he misuse his power over you ? God alone knows whether or not He will punish you for your sins."

DOCTOR : "God alone knows what is in His mind. How can a man guess it ? God is beyond all our calculations."

MASTER (to Shyam) : "That's the one theme of you Calcutta people. You all say, 'God is stained by the evil of inequality', because He has made one person happy and another miserable. What these rascals see in themselves they see in God, too."

"Hem used to come to the temple garden at Dakshineswar. Whenever he chanced to meet me, he would say : 'Well, priest, there is only one thing worth having in this world, and that is honour. Isn't that so ?' Very few indeed say that the goal of human life is the realization of God."

SHYAM : "We hear a great deal about the subtle body. Can anyone show it to us ? Can anyone demonstrate that the subtle body, when a man dies, leaves the gross body and goes away ?"

MASTER : " True devotees don't care a rap about showing you these things. What do they care whether some fool of a big man respects them or not ? The desire to have a big man under their control never enters their minds."

SHYAM : " What is the distinction between the gross body and the subtle body ?"

MASTER : " The body consisting of the five gross elements is called the gross body. The subtle body is made up of the mind, the ego, the discriminating faculty, and the mind-stuff. There is also a causal body, by means of which one enjoys the Bliss of God and holds communion with Him. The Tantra calls it the Bhagavati Tanu, the Divine Body. Beyond all these is the Mahakarana, the Great Cause. That cannot be expressed by words.

" What is the use of merely listening to words ? Do something ! What will you achieve by merely repeating the word ' siddhi ' ? Will that intoxicate you ? You will not be intoxicated even if you make a paste of siddhi and rub it all over your body. You must eat some of it. How can a man recognize yarns of different counts, such as number forty and number forty-one, unless he is in the trade ? Those who trade in yarn do not find it at all difficult to describe a thread of a particular count. Therefore I say, practise a little spiritual discipline ; then you will know all these—the gross, the subtle, the causal, and the Great Cause. While praying to God, ask only for love for His Lotus Feet.

" When Rama redeemed Ahalya⁶ from the curse, He said to her, ' Ask a boon of Me.' Ahalya said, ' O Rama, if You deign to grant me a boon, then please fulfil my desire that I may always meditate on Your Lotus Feet, even though I may be born in a pig's body.'

" I prayed to the Divine Mother only for love. I offered flowers at Her Lotus Feet and said with folded hands : ' O Mother, here is Thy ignorance and here is Thy knowledge ; take them both and give me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy holiness and here is Thy unholiness ; take them both and give me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy virtue and here is Thy sin ; here is Thy good and here is Thy evil ; take them all and give me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy dharma and here is Thy adharmā ; take them both and give me only pure love for Thee.'

" Dharma means good actions, like giving in charity. If you accept dharma, you have to accept adharmā too. If you accept virtue, you have to accept sin. If you accept knowledge, you have to accept ignorance. If you accept holiness, you have to accept unholiness. It is like a man's being aware of light, in which case he is aware of darkness too. If a man is aware of one, he is aware of many too. If he is aware of good, he is aware of evil too.

" Blessed is the man who retains his love for the Lotus Feet of God, even though he eats pork. But if a man is attached to the world, even though he lives only on boiled vegetables and cereals, then—"

DOCTOR : " He is a wretch. But let me interrupt you here and say something. Buddha once ate pork and as a result had colic. To get rid of the pain he would take opium and thus become unconscious. Do you know the meaning of Nirvana and such stuff ? Buddha would become stupefied after eating

⁶ See foot-note, p. 626.

opium. He would have no consciousness of the outer world. This is what they call Nirvana !”

All laughed to hear this novel interpretation of Nirvana. The conversation went on.

MASTER (*to Shyam*): “There is no harm in your leading the life of a householder. But do your duties in an unselfish spirit, fixing your mind on the Lotus Feet of God. You must have noticed that a man with a carbuncle on his back speaks to others in his usual way ; perhaps he attends to his daily duties also ; but his mind is always on the carbuncle. It is like that.

“Live in the world like an immoral woman. Though she performs her household duties, her mind is fixed on her sweetheart. (*To the doctor*) Do you understand that ?”

DOCTOR : “Never having had such an experience myself, how can I understand ?”

SHYAM : “Oh, yes ! You understand a little.” (*All laugh.*)

MASTER : “Moreover he has had long experience in that trade. Isn't that so ?” (*All laugh.*)

SHYAM : “Sir, what do you think of Theosophy ?”

MASTER : “The long and short of the matter is that those who go about making disciples belong to a very inferior level. So also do those who want occult powers to walk over the Ganges and to report what a person says in a far-off country and so on. It is very hard for such people to have pure love for God.”

SHYAM : “But the Theosophists have been trying to re-establish the Hindu religion.”

MASTER : “I don't know much about them.”

SHYAM : “You can learn from Theosophy where the soul goes after death—whether to the lunar sphere or the stellar sphere or some other region.”

MASTER : “That may be. But let me tell you my own attitude. Once a man asked Hanuman, ‘What day of the lunar fortnight is it ?’ Hanuman replied : ‘I know nothing about the day of the week, the day of the lunar fortnight, the position of the stars in the sky, or any such things. On Rama alone I meditate.’ That is my attitude too.”

SHYAM : “The Theosophists believe in the existence of mahatmas. Do you believe in them, sir ?”

MASTER : “If you believe in my words, I say yes. But now please leave these matters alone. Come here again when I am a little better. Some way will be found for you to attain peace of mind, if you have faith in me. You must have noticed that I don't accept any gift of money or clothes. We do not take any collection here. That is why so many people come. (*Laughter.*)

(*To the doctor*) “If you won't take offense, I shall tell you something. It is this : You have had enough of such things as money, honour, lecturing, and so on. Now for a few days direct your mind to God. And come here now and then. Your spiritual feeling will be kindled by hearing words about God.”

After a little while, as the doctor stood up to take his leave, Girish Chandra Ghosh entered the room and bowed low before the Master. Dr. Sarkar was pleased to see him and took his seat again.

DOCTOR (*pointing to Girish*): "Of course he would not come as long as I was here. No sooner am I about to leave than he enters the room."

Girish and Dr. Sarkar began to talk about the Science Association established by the latter.

MASTER: "Will you take me there one day?"

DOCTOR: "If you go there you will lose all consciousness at the sight of the wondrous works of God."

MASTER: "Oh, indeed!"

DOCTOR (*to Girish*): "Whatever you may do, please do not worship him as God. You are turning the head of this good man."

GIRISH: "What else can I do? Oh, how else shall I regard a person who has taken me across this ocean of the world, and what is still more, the ocean of doubt? There is nothing in him that I do not hold sacred. Can I ever look on even his excreta as filthy?"

DOCTOR: "This question of excreta doesn't bother me. I too have no feeling of repugnance. Once a grocer's child was brought to my office for treatment. His bowels moved there. All covered their noses with cloths; but I sat by his side for half an hour without putting a handkerchief to my nose. Besides, I cannot cover my nose when the scavenger passes by me with a tub on his head. No, I cannot do that. I know very well that there is no difference between a scavenger and myself. Why should I look down on him? Can't I take the dust of his [meaning Sri Ramakrishna's] feet? Look here."

The doctor saluted Sri Ramakrishna and touched the Master's feet with his forehead.

GIRISH: "Oh, the angels are saying, 'Blessed, blessed be this auspicious moment!'"

DOCTOR: "What is there to marvel at in taking the dust of a man's feet? I can take the dust of everybody's feet. Give me, all of you, the dust of your feet."

The doctor touched the feet of all the devotees.

NARENDRA (*to the doctor*): "We think of him [meaning the Master] as a person who is like God. Do you know, sir, what it is like? There is a point between the vegetable creation and the animal creation where it is very difficult to determine whether a particular thing is a vegetable or an animal. Likewise, there is a stage between the man-world and the God-world where it is extremely hard to say whether a person is a man or God."

DOCTOR: "Well, my dear young friend, one cannot apply analogies to things divine."

NARENDRA: "I do not say that he is God. What I am saying is that he is a godlike man."

DOCTOR: "One should suppress one's feelings in such a matter. It is bad to give vent to them. Alas! No one understands my own feelings. Even my best friend thinks of me as a stern and cruel person. Even

people like you will perhaps one day throw me out after beating me with your shoes."

MASTER : " Don't say such a thing ! They love you so much ! They await your coming as eagerly as the bridesmaids in the bridal chamber await the coming of the groom."

GIRISH : " Everyone has the greatest respect for you."

DOCTOR : " My son and even my wife think of me as a hard-hearted person. My only crime is that I do not display my feelings."

GIRISH : " In that case, sir, it would be wise for you to open the door of your heart, at least out of pity for your friends ; for you see that your friends cannot otherwise understand you."

DOCTOR : " Will you believe me when I say that my feelings get worked up even more than yours ? (*To Narendra*) I shed tears in solitude.

(*To Sri Ramakrishna*) " Well, may I say something ? When you are in ecstasy you place your foot on others' bodies. That is not good."

MASTER : " Do you think I know at that time that I am touching another with my foot ? "

DOCTOR : " You feel that it is not the right thing to do, don't you ? "

MASTER : " How can I explain to you what I experience in samadhi ? After coming down from that state I think, sometimes, that my illness may be due to samadhi. The thing is, the thought of God makes me mad. All this is the result of my divine madness. How can I help it ? "

DOCTOR : " Now he accepts my view. He expresses regret for what he does. He is conscious that the act is sinful."

MASTER (*to Narendra*) : " You are very clever. Why don't you answer ? Explain it all to the doctor."

GIRISH (*to the doctor*) : " Sir, you are mistaken. He is not expressing regret for touching the bodies of his devotees during samadhi. His own body is pure, untouched by any sin. That he touches others in this way is for their good. Sometimes he thinks that he may have got this illness by taking their sins upon himself.

" Think of your own case. Once you suffered from colic. Didn't you have regrets at that time for sitting up and reading till very late at night ? Does that prove that reading till the late hours of the night is, in itself, a bad thing ? He [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] too may be sorry that he is ill. But that does not make him feel that it is wrong on his part to touch others for their welfare."

Dr. Sarkar felt rather embarrassed and said to Girish : " I confess my defeat at your hands. Give me the dust of your feet." He saluted Girish.

DOCTOR (*to Narendra*) : " Whatever else one may say about him [meaning Girish], one must admit his intellectual powers."

NARENDRA (*to the doctor*) : " You may look at the thing from another standpoint. You can devote your life to scientific research without giving a thought to your health or comfort. But the Science of God is the grandest of all sciences. Isn't it natural for him to risk his health to realize Him ? "

DOCTOR : " All religious reformers, including Jesus, Chaitanya, Buddha, and Mohammed, were in the end filled with egotism. They all said, ' Whatever I say is alone true.' How shocking ! "

GIRISH (*to the doctor*) : " Now, sir, you are committing the same mistake. You are accusing them all of egotism. You are finding fault with them. For that very reason you too can be accused of egotism."

Dr. Sarkar remained silent.

NARENDRA (*to the doctor*) : " We offer worship to him bordering on divine worship."

At these words the Master laughed like a child.



XLVIII

IN THE COMPANY OF DEVOTEES AT SYAMPUKUR

Thursday, October 29, 1885

IT WAS ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK in the morning when M. arrived at Dr. Sarkar's house in Sankharitola, Calcutta, to report Sri Ramakrishna's condition. M. and Dr. Sarkar became engaged in conversation.

DOCTOR : " You see, Dr. Behari Bhaduri always harps on the same thing. He says that Goethe's spirit came out of his body and that Goethe himself saw it. It must have been very amazing."

M : " As Sri Ramakrishna says, what shall we gain from these discussions ? We have been born in this world in order to cultivate devotion to the Lotus Feet of God. He tells us the story of a man who entered an orchard to eat mangoes. But instead of eating the fruit, he took out pencil and paper and began to jot down the number of trees, branches, and leaves in the orchard. A servant saw him and asked : ' What are you doing ? Why have you come here ? ' The man said : ' I have come here to eat mangoes. I am now counting the trees, branches, and leaves in the orchard.' Thereupon the servant replied : ' If you have come here to eat mangoes, then enjoy them. What will you gain by counting the trees, branches, and leaves ? ' "

DOCTOR : " I see that the Paramahamsa has been able to extract the essence."

Then Dr. Sarkar told M. many stories about his homeopathic hospital. He showed M. the list of the patients who visited the hospital every day. He further remarked that at the beginning many medical practitioners had discouraged him about homeopathy and had even written against him in magazines.

M. and Dr. Sarkar got into the doctor's carriage. The doctor visited many patients. He entered a house of the Tagore family at Pathuriaghata and was detained there by the head of the family. Returning to the carriage, he began to talk to M.

DOCTOR : " I was talking to that gentleman about the Paramahamsa. We also talked about Theosophy and Colonel Olcott. The Paramahamsa is angry with the gentleman. Do you know why ? Because he says he knows everything."

M : " No, why should the Master be angry ? I heard that they once met each other. Paramahamsadeva was talking about God. The gentleman said, ' Oh, yes ! I know all that ! ' "

DOCTOR : " He has donated thirty-two thousand five hundred rupees to the Science Association. "

They drove on, talking about Sri Ramakrishna's illness and the care that should be taken of him.

DOCTOR : " Do you intend to send him back to Dakshineswar ? "

M : " No, sir. That would greatly inconvenience the devotees. They can always visit him if he is in Calcutta. "

DOCTOR : " But it is very expensive here. "

M : " The devotees don't mind that. All they want is to be able to serve him. As regards the expense, it must be borne whether he lives in Calcutta or at Dakshineswar. But if he goes back to Dakshineswar, the devotees won't always be able to visit him, and that will cause them great worry. "

Dr. Sarkar and M. arrived at Syampukur and found the Master sitting with the devotees in his room. Dr. Bhaduri also was there.

Dr. Sarkar examined the Master's pulse and inquired about his condition. The conversation turned to God.

DR. BHADURI : " Shall I tell you the truth ? All this is unreal, like a dream. "

DR. SARKAR : " Is everything delusion ? Then whose is this delusion ? And why this delusion ? If all know it to be delusion, then why do they talk ? I cannot believe that God is real and His creation unreal. "

MASTER : " That is a good attitude. It is good to look on God as the Master and oneself as His servant. As long as a man feels the body to be real, as long as he is conscious of ' I ' and ' you ', it is good to keep the relationship of master and servant ; it is not good to cherish the idea of ' I am He ' . "

" Let me tell you something else. You see the same room whether you look as it from one side or from the middle of the room. "

DR. BHADURI (to Dr. Sarkar) : " What I have just said you will find in the Vedanta. You must study the scriptures. Then you will understand. "

DR. SARKAR : " Why so ? Has he [meaning the Master] acquired all this wisdom by studying the scriptures ? He too supports my view. Can't one be wise without reading the scriptures ? "

MASTER : " But how many scriptures I have heard ! "

DR. SARKAR : " A man may mistake the meaning if he only hears. In your case it is not mere hearing. "

MASTER (to Dr. Sarkar) : " I understand that you spoke of me as insane. That is why they (pointing to M. and the others) don't want to go to you. "

DR. SARKAR (looking at M.) : " Why should I call you [meaning the Master] insane ? But I mentioned your egotism. Why do you allow people to take the dust of your feet ? "

M : " Otherwise they weep. "

DR. SARKAR : " That is their mistake. They should be told about it. "

M : " Why should you object to their taking the dust of his feet ? Doesn't God dwell in all beings ? "

DR. SARKAR : " I don't object to that. Then you must take the dust of everyone's feet."

M : " But there is a greater manifestation of God in some men than in others. There is water everywhere ; but you see more of it in a lake, a river, or an ocean. Will you show the same respect to a new Bachelor of Science as you do to Faraday ?"

DR. SARKAR : " I agree with that. But why do you call him God ?"

M : " Why do we salute each other ? It is because God dwells in everybody's heart. You haven't given much thought to this subject."

MASTER (*to Dr. Sarkar*) : " I have already told you that some people reveal more of God than others. Earth reflects the sun's rays in one way, a tree in another way, and a mirror in still another way. You see a better reflection in a mirror than in other objects. Don't you see that these devotees here are not on the same level with Prahlada and others of his kind ? Prahlada's whole heart and soul were dedicated to God."

Dr. Sarkar did not reply. All were silent.

MASTER (*to Dr. Sarkar*) : " You see, you have love for this [meaning himself]. You told me that you loved me."

DR. SARKAR : " You are a child of nature. That is why I tell you all this. It hurts me to see people salute you by touching your feet. I say to myself, ' They are spoiling such a good man.' Keshab Sen, too, was spoiled that way by his devotees. Listen to me—"

MASTER : " Listen to you ? You are greedy, lustful, and egotistic."

DR. BHADURI (*to Dr. Sarkar*) : " That is to say, you have the traits of a jiva, an embodied being. These are his traits : lust, egotism, greed for wealth, and a hankering after name and fame. All embodied beings have these traits."

DR. SARKAR (*to the Master*) : " If you talk that way, I shall only examine your throat and go away. Perhaps that is what you want. In that case we should not talk about anything else. But if you want discussion, then I shall say what I think to be right."

All remained silent.

After a while the Master became engaged in conversation with Dr. Bhaduri.

MASTER : " Let me tell you the truth. He [meaning Dr. Sarkar] is now following the path of negation. Therefore he discriminates, following the process of ' Neti, neti ', and reasons in this way : God is not the living beings ; He is not the universe ; He is outside the creation. But later he will follow the path of affirmation and accept everything as the manifestation of God.

" By taking off, one by one, the sheaths of a banana tree, one obtains the pith. The sheaths are one thing, and the pith is another. The sheaths are not the pith, and the pith is not the sheaths. But in the end one realizes that the pith cannot exist apart from the sheaths, and the sheaths cannot exist apart from the pith ; they are part and parcel of one and the same banana tree. Likewise, it is God who has become the twenty-four cosmic principles ; it is He who has become man.

(To Dr. Sarkar) "There are three kinds of devotees : superior, mediocre, and inferior. The inferior devotee says, 'God is out there.' According to him God is different from His creation. The mediocre devotee says : 'God is the Antaryami, the Inner Guide. God dwells in everyone's heart.' The mediocre devotee sees God in the heart. But the superior devotee sees that God alone has become everything ; He alone has become the twenty-four cosmic principles. He finds that everything, above and below, is filled with God.

"Read the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata*, and the Vedanta, and you will understand all this. Is not God in His creation ?"

DR. SARKAR : "Not in any particular object. He is everywhere. And because He is everywhere, He cannot be sought after."

The conversation turned to other things. Sri Ramakrishna was always experiencing ecstatic moods, which the doctor said might aggravate his illness. Dr. Sarkar said to him : "You must suppress your emotion. My feelings, too, are greatly stirred up. I can dance much more than you."

THE YOUNGER NAREN (*smiling*) : "What would you do if your emotion increased a little more ?"

DR. SARKAR : "My power of control would also increase."

MASTER AND M : "You may say that now !"

M : "Can you tell us what you would do if you went into an ecstatic mood ?"

The conversation turned to money.

MASTER (*to Dr. Sarkar*) : "I don't think about it at all. You know that very well, don't you ? This is not a pretence."

DR. SARKAR : "Even I have no desire for money—not to speak of yourself ! My cash-box lies open."

MASTER : "Jadu Mallick, too, is absent-minded. When he takes his meals he sometimes becomes so absent-minded that he doesn't know whether the food is good or bad. When someone says to him, 'Don't eat that ; it doesn't taste good', Jadu says : 'Eh ? Is this food bad ? Why, that's so !'"

Was the Master hinting that there was an ocean of difference between absent-mindedness due to the contemplation of God, and absent-mindedness due to preoccupation with worldly thoughts ?

Pointing to Dr. Sarkar, Sri Ramakrishna said to the devotees, with a smile : "When a thing is boiled, it becomes soft. At first he was very hard. Now he is softening from inside."

DR. SARKAR : "When a thing is boiled, it begins to soften from the outside. I am afraid that won't happen to me in this birth." (*All laugh.*)

Dr. Sarkar was about to take his leave. He was talking to Sri Ramakrishna.

DOCTOR : "Can't you forbid people to salute you by touching your feet ?"

MASTER : "Can all comprehend the Indivisible Satchidananda ?"

DR. SARKAR : "But shouldn't you tell people what is right ?"

MASTER : "People have different tastes. Besides, all have not the same fitness for spiritual life."

DR. SARKAR : "How is that ?"



MASTER : " Don't you know what difference in taste is ? Some enjoy fish curry ; some, fried fish ; some, pickled fish ; and again, some, the rich dish of fish pilau. Then too, there is difference in fitness. I ask people to learn to shoot at a banana tree first, then at the wick of a lamp, and then at a flying bird."

It was dusk. Sri Ramakrishna became absorbed in contemplation of God. For the time being he forgot all about his painful disease. Several intimate disciples sat near him and looked at him intently. After a long time he became aware of the outer world and said to M. in a whisper : " You see, my mind was completely merged in the Indivisible Brahman. After that I saw many things. I found that the doctor will have spiritual awakening. But it will take some time. I won't have to tell him much. I saw another person while in that mood. My mind said to me, ' Attract him too.' I shall tell you about him later."

Shyam Basu, Dr. Dukari, and a few other devotees arrived. Sri Ramakrishna talked to them.

SHYAM : " Ah, what a fine thing you said to us the other day ! "

MASTER (*smiling*) : " What was that ? "

SHYAM : " What remains with a man when he goes beyond jnana and ajnana, knowledge and ignorance."

MASTER (*smiling*) : " It is vijnana, special Knowledge of God. To know many things is ignorance. To know that God dwells in all beings is knowledge. And what is vijnana ? It is to know God in a special manner, to converse with Him and feel Him to be one's own relative.

" To know that there is fire in wood is knowledge. But to make a fire with that wood, cook food with that fire, and become healthy and strong from that food is vijnana."

SHYAM (*smiling*) : " And about the thorn ? "

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Yes. When a thorn gets into the sole of your foot, you procure a second thorn. After taking out the first thorn with the help of the second, you throw both thorns away. Likewise, you should procure the thorn of knowledge in order to remove the thorn of ignorance. After destroying ignorance, you should discard both knowledge and ignorance. Then you attain vijnana."

Sri Ramakrishna was pleased with Shyam Basu. He was quite an elderly person and wanted to devote his time to contemplation. This was his second visit to the Master.

MASTER (*to Shyam Basu*) : " Give up worldly talk altogether. Don't talk about anything whatever but God. If you see a worldly person coming near you, leave the place before he arrives. You have spent your whole life in the world. You have seen that it is all hollow. Isn't that so ? God alone is Substance, and all else is illusory. God alone is real, and all else has only a two-days' existence. What is there in the world ? The world is like a pickled hog plum : one craves for it. But what is there in a hog plum ? Only skin and pit. And if you eat it you will have colic."

SHYAM : " Yes, sir. Everything you have said is true."

MASTER : " For many years you have devoted yourself to various worldly things. You will not be able to think of God and meditate on Him in this confusion of the world. A little solitude is necessary for you ; otherwise your mind will not be steady. Therefore you must fix a place for meditation at least half a mile away from your house."

Shyam Basu remained silent a few moments. He appeared absorbed in thought.

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Besides, all your teeth are gone. Why should you bother so much about the Durga Puja ? (*All laugh.*) A man used to celebrate the worship of Durga with the sacrifice of goats and with other ceremonies. He continued the worship many years and then stopped it. A friend asked him, 'Why don't you perform the Durga Puja any more ?' 'Brother,' replied the man, 'my teeth are all gone. I have lost the power to chew goat-meat.'"

SHYAM : " Ah ! How sweet these words are !"

MASTER (*smiling*) : " This world is a mixture of sand and sugar. Like the ant, one should discard the sand and eat the sugar. He who can eat the sugar is clever indeed. Build a quiet place for thinking of God—a place for your meditation. Have it ready. I shall visit it."

SHYAM : " Sir, is there such a thing as reincarnation ? Shall we be born again ?"

MASTER : " Ask God about it. Pray to Him sincerely. He will tell you everything. Speak to Jadu Mallick, and he himself will tell you how many houses he has, and how many government bonds. It is not right to try to know these things at the beginning. First of all realize God ; then He Himself will let you know whatever you desire."

SHYAM : " Sir, how much wrong, how many sinful things a man does in this world ! Can he ever realize God ?"

MASTER : " If a man practises spiritual discipline before his death and if he gives up his body praying to God and meditating on Him, when will sin touch him ? It is no doubt the elephant's nature to smear his body with dust and mud, even after his bath. But he cannot do so if the mahut takes him into the stable immediately after his bath."

In spite of his serious illness the Master keenly felt the sorrow and suffering of men. Day and night he thought about their welfare. The devotees wondered at his compassion. The assurance of Sri Ramakrishna that no sin can touch a man if he gives up his body while praying to God was deeply impressed on their minds.

Friday, October 30, 1885

It was nine o'clock in the morning. Sri Ramakrishna was talking with M. in his room. No one else was present. M. was going to Dr. Sarkar to report his condition and bring him to examine the Master.

MASTER (*to M., smiling*) : " Purna came this morning. He has such a nice nature ! Manindra has an element of Prakriti, of womanliness. He has read the life of Chaitanya and understood the attitude of the gopis. He has

also realized that God is Purusha and man is Prakriti, and that man should worship God as His handmaid. How remarkable !”

M : “ It is true, sir.”

Purna was then fifteen or sixteen years old. Sri Ramakrishna always longed to see him. But his relatives did not allow him to visit the Master. One night, before his illness, Sri Ramakrishna had been so eager to see Purna that he had suddenly left Dakshineswar and arrived at M.’s house in Calcutta. M. had brought Purna from his home to see Sri Ramakrishna. The Master had given the boy many instructions about prayer and had afterwards returned to Dakshineswar. Manindra was about the same age as Purna. The devotees addressed him as “ khoka ”.¹ He used to dance in ecstasy when he heard the chanting of God’s name.

About half past ten M. arrived at Dr. Sarkar’s house. He went up to the second floor and sat in a chair on the porch adjacent to the drawing-room. In front of Dr. Sarkar was a glass bowl in which some goldfish were kept. Now and then Dr. Sarkar threw some cardamom shells into the bowl. Again, he threw pellets of flour to the sparrows. M. watched him.

DOCTOR (*smiling, to M.*) : “ You see, these goldfish are staring at me like devotees staring at God. They haven’t noticed the food I have thrown into the water. Therefore I say, what will you gain by mere bhakti ? You need knowledge too. (*M. smiles.*) Look there at the sparrows ! They flew away when I threw flour pellets to them. They were frightened. They have no bhakti because they are without knowledge. They don’t know that flour is their food.”

Dr. Sarkar and M. entered the drawing-room. There were shelves all around filled with books. The doctor rested a little. M. looked at the books. He picked up Canon Farrar’s *Life of Jesus* and read a few pages. Dr. Sarkar told M. how the first homeopathic hospital was started in the teeth of great opposition. He asked M. to read the letters relating to it, which had been published in the “ Calcutta Journal of Medicine ” in 1876. Dr. Sarkar was much devoted to homeopathy.

M. picked up another book, Munger’s *New Theology*. Dr. Sarkar noticed it.

DOCTOR : “ Munger has based his conclusions on nice argument and reasoning. It is not like your believing a thing simply because a Chaitanya or a Buddha or a Jesus Christ has said so.”

M. (*smiling*) : “ Yes, we should not believe Chaitanya or Buddha ; but we must believe Munger ! ”

DOCTOR : “ Whatever you say.”

M : “ We must quote someone as our authority ; so it is Munger.” (*The doctor smiles.*)

Dr. Sarkar got into his carriage accompanied by M. The carriage proceeded toward Syampukur. It was midday. They gossiped together. The conversation turned to Dr. Bhaduri, who had also been visiting the Master now and then.

M. (*smiling*) : “ Bhaduri said about you that you must begin all over again from the stone and brick-bat.”

¹ Baby.

DR. SARKAR : " How is that ? "

M : " Because you don't believe in the mahatmas, astral bodies, and so forth. Perhaps Bhaduri is a Theosophist. Further, you don't believe in the Incarnation of God. That is why he teased you, saying that when you died this time you would certainly not be reborn as a human being. That would be far off. You wouldn't be born even as an animal or bird, or even as a tree or a plant. You would have to begin all over again, from stone and brick-bat. Then, after many, many births, you might assume a human body."

DR. SARKAR : " Goodness gracious ! "

M : " Bhaduri further said that the knowledge of your physical science was a false knowledge. Such knowledge is momentary. He gave an analogy. Suppose there are two wells. The one gets its water from an underground spring. The other has no such spring and is filled with rain-water. But the water of the second well does not last a long time. The knowledge of your science is like the rain-water. It dries up."

DR. SARKAR (*with a smile*) : " I see ! "

The carriage arrived at Cornwallis Street. Dr. Sarkar picked up Dr. Pratap Mazumdar. Pratap had visited Sri Ramakrishna the previous day. They soon arrived at Syampukur.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room, on the second floor, with several devotees.

DR. SARKAR (*to the Master*) : " I see you are coughing." (*Smiling*) But it is good to go to Kasi." (*All laugh.*)

MASTER (*smiling*) : " But that will give me liberation. I don't want liberation ; I want love of God ! " (*All laugh.*)

Pratap was Dr. Bhaduri's son-in-law. Sri Ramakrishna was speaking to Pratap in praise of his father-in-law.

MASTER (*to Pratap*) : " Ah, what a grand person he has become ! He contemplates God and observes purity in his conduct. Further, he accepts both aspects of God—personal and impersonal."

M. was very eager to mention Dr. Bhaduri's remarks about Dr. Sarkar's being born again as a stone or brick-bat. He asked the younger Naren very softly whether he remembered those remarks of Dr. Bhaduri. Sri Ramakrishna overheard this.

MASTER (*to Dr. Sarkar*) : " Do you know what Dr. Bhaduri said about you ? He said that, because you didn't believe these things, in the next cycle you would have to begin your earthly life from a stone or brick-bat." (*All laugh.*)

DR. SARKAR (*smiling*) : " Suppose I begin from a stone or brick-bat, and after many births obtain a human body ; but as soon as I come back to this place I shall have to begin over again from a stone or brick-bat." (*The doctor and all laugh.*)

The conversation turned to the Master's ecstasy in spite of his illness.

PRATAP : " Yesterday I saw you in an ecstatic mood."

MASTER : " It happened of itself ; but it was not intense."

* The Bengali word for " coughing " is " kasi ". Kasi is also a name for Benares.



DR. SARKAR : " Ecstasy and talking are not good for you now."

MASTER (to Dr. Sarkar) : " I saw you yesterday in my samadhi. I found that you are a mine of knowledge ; but it is all dry knowledge. You have not tasted divine bliss. (To Pratap, referring to Dr. Sarkar) If he ever tastes divine bliss, he will see everything, above and below, filled with it. Then he will not say that whatever he says is right and what others say is wrong. Then he will not utter sharp, strong, pointed words."

The devotees remained silent.

Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna went into a spiritual mood and said to Dr. Sarkar : " Mahindra Babu, what is this madness of yours about money ? Why such attachment to wife ? Why such longing for name and fame ? Give up all these, now, and direct your mind to God with whole-souled devotion. Enjoy the Bliss of God."

Dr. Sarkar sat still without uttering a word. The devotees also remained silent.

MASTER : " Nangta used to tell me how a jnani meditates : Everywhere is water ; all the regions above and below are filled with water ; man, like a fish, is swimming joyously in that water. In real meditation you will actually see all this.

"Take the case of the infinite ocean. There is no limit to its water. Suppose a pot is immersed in it : there is water both inside and outside the pot. The jnani sees that both inside and outside there is nothing but Paramatman. Then what is this pot ? It is 'I-consciousness'. Because of the pot the water appears to be divided into two parts ; because of the pot you seem to perceive an inside, and an outside. One feels that way as long as this pot of 'I' exists. When the 'I' disappears, what remains. That cannot be described in words.

"Do you know another way a jnani meditates ? Think of infinite akasa and a bird flying there, joyfully spreading its wings. There is the Chidakasa, and Atman is the bird. The bird is not imprisoned in a cage ; it flies in the Chidakasa. Its joy is limitless."

The devotees listened with great attention to these words about meditation. After a time Pratap resumed the conversation.

PRATAP (to Dr. Sarkar) : " When one thinks seriously, one undoubtedly sees everything as a mere shadow."

DR. SARKAR : " If you speak of a shadow, then you need three things : the sun, the object, and the shadow. How can there be any shadow without an object ? And you say that God is real and the creation unreal. I say that the creation is real too."

PRATAP : " Very well. As you see a reflection in a mirror, so you see this universe in the mirror of your mind."

DR. SARKAR : " But how can there be a reflection without an object."

NARENDRA : " Why, God is the object."

Dr. Sarkar remained silent.

MASTER (to Dr. Sarkar) : " You said a very fine thing. No one else has said before that samadhi is the result of the union of the mind with God. You alone have said that.

"Shivanath said that one lost one's head by too much thinking of God. In others words, one becomes unconscious by meditating on the Universal Consciousness. Think of it! Becoming unconscious by contemplating Him who is of the very nature of Consciousness, and whose Consciousness endows the world with consciousness !

"And what does your 'science' say ? This combined with this produces that ; that combined with that produces this. One is more likely to lose consciousness by contemplating those things—by handling material things too much."

DR. SARKAR : "One can see God in those things."

M : "If so, one sees God more clearly in man, and still better in a great soul. In a great soul there is a greater manifestation of God."

DR. SARKAR : "Yes, in man, no doubt."

MASTER : "Losing consciousness by contemplating God—through whose Consciousness even inert matter appears to be conscious, and hands, feet, and body move ! People say that the body moves of itself ; but they do not know that it is God who moves it. They say that water scalds the hand. But water can by no means scald the hand ; it is the heat in the water, the fire in the water, that scalds.

"Rice is boiling in a pot. Potatoes and egg-plant are also jumping about in the pot. The children say that the potatoes and egg-plant jump of themselves ; they do not know that there is fire underneath. Man says that the sense-organs do their work of themselves ; but he does not know that inside dwells He whose very nature is Consciousness."

Dr. Sarkar stood up. He was about to take his leave. Sri Ramakrishna also stood up.

DR. SARKAR : "People call on God when they are faced with a crisis. Is it for the mere fun of it that they say, 'O Lord ! Thou, Thou !' ? You speak of God because of that trouble in your throat. You have now fallen into the clutches of the cotton-carder. You had better speak to the carder. I am just quoting your own words."

MASTER : "There is nothing for me to say."

DR. SARKAR : "Why not ? We lie in the lap of God. We feel free with Him. To whom should we speak about our illness if not to Him ?"

MASTER : "Right you are. Orce in a while I try to speak to Him about it, but I do not succeed."

DR. SARKAR : "Why should you even speak to Him ? Does He not know of it ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "A Mussalman, while saying his prayers, shouted : 'O Allah ! O Allah !' Another person said to him : 'You are calling on Allah. That's all right. But why are you shouting like that ? Don't you know that He hears the sound of the anklets on the feet of an ant ?'

"When the mind is united with God, one sees Him very near, in one's own heart. But you must remember one thing. The more you realize this unity, the farther your mind is withdrawn from worldly things. There is the story of Vilwamangal in the *Bhaktamala*. He used to visit a prostitute.



One night he was very late in going to her house. He had been detained at home by the sraddha ceremony of his father and mother. In his hands he was carrying the food offered in the ceremony, to feed his mistress. His whole soul was so set upon the woman that he was not at all conscious of his movements. He didn't even know how he was walking. There was a yogi seated on the path, meditating on God with eyes closed. Vilwamangal stepped on him. The yogi became angry, and cried out : 'What ? Are you blind ? I have been thinking of God, and you step on my body !' 'I beg your pardon,' said Vilwamangal, 'but may I ask you something ? I have been unconscious, thinking of a prostitute, and you are conscious of the outer world though thinking of God. What kind of meditation is that ?' In the end Vilwamangal renounced the world and went away in order to worship God. He said to the prostitute : 'You are my guru. You have taught me how one should yearn for God.' He addressed the prostitute as his mother and gave her up."

DR. SARKAR : "To address a woman as mother is the Tantrik form of worship."

MASTER : "Listen to a story. There was a king who used daily to hear the *Bhagavata* recited by a pundit. Every day, after explaining the sacred book, the pundit would say to the king, 'O King, have you understood what I have said ?' And everyday the king would reply, 'You had better understand it first yourself.' The pundit would return home and think : 'Why does the king talk to me that way day after day ? I explain the texts to him so clearly, and he says to me, "You had better understand it first yourself." What does he mean ?' The pundit used to practise spiritual discipline. A few days later he came to realize that God alone is real and everything else—house, family, wealth, friends, name, and fame—illusory. Convinced of the unreality of the world, he renounced it. As he left home he asked a man to take this message to the king : 'O King, I now understand.'

"Here is another story. A man needed a scholar of the *Bhagavata* to expound the sacred text to him every day. But it was very difficult to procure such a scholar. After he had searched a great deal, another man came to him and said, 'Sir, I have found an excellent scholar of the *Bhagavata*.' 'Very well,' said the man, 'bring him here.' The other man replied : 'But there is a little hitch. The scholar has a few ploughs and bullocks ; he is busy with them all day. He must look after the cultivation of his land. He hasn't a moment's leisure.' Thereupon the man who required the scholar said : 'I don't want a *Bhagavata* scholar who is burdened with ploughs and bullocks. I want a man who has leisure and can tell me about God.' (To Dr. Sarkar) Do you understand ?"

Dr. Sarkar remained silent.

MASTER : "Shall I tell you the truth ? What will you gain by mere scholarship ? The pundits hear many things and know many things—the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras. But of what avail is mere scholarship ? Discrimination and renunciation are necessary. If a man has discrimination and renunciation, then one can listen to him. But of what use are the words of a man who looks on the world as the essential thing ?

"What is the lesson of the *Gita* ? It is what you get by repeating the word ten times. As you repeat 'Gita', 'Gita', the word becomes reversed into 'tagi', 'tagi'—which implies renunciation. He alone has understood the secret of the *Gita* who has renounced his attachment to 'woman and gold' and has directed his entire love to God. It isn't necessary to read the whole of the *Gita*. The purpose of reading the book is served if one practises renunciation."

DR. SARKAR : "A man once explained the meaning of Radha to me. He said to me : 'Do you know the meaning of Radha ? Reverse the word and it becomes "dhara".³ That's the meaning.' (*All laugh.*) Well, let us stop here for today."

Dr. Sarkar left. M. sat near Sri Ramakrishna and repeated the conversation he had had at Dr. Sarkar's house.

M : "Dr. Sarkar was feeding the goldfish with cardamom shells and the sparrows with flour pellets. He said to me : 'Did you notice ? The fish didn't see the cardamom shells and therefore went away. First of all we want knowledge, and then bhakti. Did you notice those sparrows ? They too flew away when I threw the pellets of flour. They have no jnana ; therefore they have no bhakti.'"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "That knowledge means the knowledge of the physical world, the knowledge of 'science'."

M : "He said further : 'Must I believe a thing simply because a Chaitanya or a Buddha or a Christ has said it ? That would not be proper.' A grandson has been born to him. He praised his daughter-in-law highly. He said, 'I don't notice her at all in the house ; she is so quiet and bashful.'"

MASTER : "He has been thinking of this place [meaning himself]. His faith is growing. Is it possible to get rid of egotism altogether ? Such scholarship ! Such fame ! And he has so much money ! But he doesn't show disrespect for what I say."

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon. The devotees were sitting quietly in the room. Many outsiders also were present. All sat in silence.

M. was seated very near Sri Ramakrishna. Now and then they exchanged a word or two in a low voice. The Master wanted to put on his coat. M. helped him.

MASTER (*to M.*) : "You see, nowadays it is not necessary for me to meditate much. All at once I become aware of the Indivisible Brahman. Nowadays the vision of the Absolute is continuous with me."

M. did not reply. The room was full of men, all silent.

Presently Sri Ramakrishna spoke.

MASTER : "Well, all these people are sitting here without uttering a word. Their eyes are fixed on me. They are neither talking nor singing. What do they see in me ?"

M. said to the Master : "Sir, they have already heard many things you have said. Now they are seeing what they can never see anywhere else—a

³ The word "dhara" does not mean anything in particular. The doctor made the statement to change the conversation.

man always blissful, of childlike nature, free from egotism, and intoxicated with divine love. The other day you were pacing the outer room of Ishan's house. We too were with you. A man came to me and said that he had never before seen such a happy person as you."

M. became silent. The room was still. A few minutes later Sri Ramakrishna spoke to M. in a whisper.

MASTER : "Well, how is the doctor coming along ? Does he now receive well the ideas of this place ?"

M : "How can an effective seed fail to sprout ? It must germinate somehow or other. I feel like laughing when I remember what you said the other day."

MASTER : "What was that ?"

M : "You said that Jadu Mallick was so absent-minded that while taking his meals he didn't know whether a particular dish was seasoned with salt or not. If anyone pointed out to him that a dish was not salted, he would say, in a surprised voice : 'Yes ? Yes ? I see it is not salted.' You told this to the doctor because he had said to you that he was always absent-minded. You meant that he became absent-minded thinking of worldly things and not because of contemplation of God."

MASTER : "Will he not pay attention to what I say ?"

M : "Of course he will. But he forgets many of your instructions because of his numerous duties. Today, too, he made a nice remark when he said, 'To look on a woman as mother is a spiritual discipline of the Tantra.'"

MASTER : "What did I say to that ?"

M : "You told him about that *Bhagavata* scholar who owned bullocks and ploughs. (*The Master smiles.*) Further, you told him about the king who said to the pundit of the *Bhagavata*, 'You had better understand it yourself first.' (*The Master smiles.*)

"Then you told him about the *Gita*, whose essence is the renunciation of 'woman and gold', renunciation of the attachment to 'woman and gold'. You said to him, 'How can a worldly man who has not renounced "woman and gold" teach others ?' Perhaps he didn't understand the drift of your words. He changed the subject."

Sri Ramakrishna was thinking about the welfare of his devotees. Purna and Manindra were two of his young devotees. He sent Manindra to talk to Purna.

It was evening. A lamp was burning in Sri Ramakrishna's room. The devotees and visitors were sitting at a distance. The Master was introspective. Those in the room were also thinking of God and sat in silence.

A few minutes afterwards Narendra entered the room with a friend, whom he introduced to the Master as an author. Sri Ramakrishna talked with him about the metaphysical significance of Radha and Krishna. The author said that Radha and Krishna were the Supreme Brahman. Vishnu, Siva, Durga, and the other deities had sprung from them.

MASTER : "That is good. There are different aspects of Radha. In Her seductive aspect She was Chandravali. In Her aspect of love She participated

in Sri Krishna's lila at Vrindavan. Nandaghosh, Krishna's foster-father, had the vision of the Eternal Radha.

"First is the seductive Radha, then the Radha of love. If you go farther, you will see the Eternal Radha. It is like taking off the layers of an onion one by one. First the red layers, then the pink, then the white. Afterwards you don't find any more layers. Such is the nature of the Eternal Radha, Radha the Absolute. There the discrimination following the process of 'Not this, not this' comes to an end.

"There are two aspects of Radha-Krishna : the Absolute and the Relative. They are like the sun and its rays. The Absolute may be likened to the sun, and the Relative to the rays.

"A genuine bhakta dwells sometimes on the Absolute and sometimes on the Relative. Both the Absolute and the Relative belong to one and the same Reality. It is all one—neither two nor many."

AUTHOR : "Sir, why do they speak of the 'Krishna of Vrindavan' and the 'Krishna of Mathura'?"⁴

MASTER : "That is the view of the goswamis. But the scholars of upper India think differently. According to these scholars there is only Krishna, and no Radha. The Krishna of Dwaraka is not associated with Radha."

AUTHOR : "Sir, Radha and Krishna are themselves the Supreme Brahman."

MASTER : "That is good. But you must remember that everything is possible for God. He is formless, and again He assumes forms. He is the individual and He is the universe. He is Brahman and He is Sakti. There is no end to Him, no limit. Nothing is impossible for Him. No matter how high the kites and vultures soar, they can never strike against the ceiling of the sky. If you ask me what Brahman is like, all I can say is that It cannot be described in words. Even when one has realized Brahman, one cannot describe It. If someone asks you what ghee is like, your answer will be, 'Ghee is like ghee.' The only analogy for Brahman is Brahman. Nothing exists besides It."

Saturday, October 31, 1885

Hariballav Bose, a cousin of Balaram, came to see Sri Ramakrishna. He saluted the Master respectfully.

Hariballav was the government pleader at Cuttack. He did not approve of Balaram's visiting the Master, especially with the ladies of the family. Balaram had said to his cousin : "You had better meet him first. Then you can say whatever you like."

Presently the Master and Hariballav became engaged in conversation.

MASTER : "Can you tell me how I shall get well ? Do you think this is a serious illness ?"

HARIBALLAV : "Sir, the doctors can tell you better than I about that."

⁴ The Krishna of Vrindavan, where He was a cowherd boy, is always associated with Radha and the gopis ; but the Krishna of Mathura and Dwaraka, where He was the king, is not associated with them.

MASTER : "When the women take the dust of my feet, I say to myself that they are saluting God, who dwells inside me. I look at it in that way."

HARIBALLAV : "You are a holy man. All should take the dust of your feet. What harm is there in that ?"

MASTER : "You may speak that way about sages like Dhruva, Prahlada, Narada, or Kapila ; but who am I ? Please come again."

HARIBALLAV : "I shall certainly come, because you attract me. You don't have to urge me."

Hariballav was about to depart. He saluted Sri Ramakrishna and was going to take the dust of the Master's feet, when Sri Ramakrishna moved his feet away. But Hariballav persisted ; he took the dust of Sri Ramakrishna's feet against the latter's wish.

When he stood up, the Master stood up too, to show him courtesy. The Master said to him : "Balaram feels unhappy because I don't go to his house. I thought of visiting you all there one day, but then I was afraid you might say to Balaram, 'Who asked him to come here ?' "

HARIBALLAV : "Who has been telling you things ? Please don't let such a thought enter your mind."

Hariballav departed.

MASTER (to M.) : "He is a devotee of God ; why else would he have forcibly taken the dust of my feet ? I told you the other day that in samadhi I had seen Dr. Sarkar and another person. He is the other person. So he has come."

M : "Yes, sir. Undoubtedly he is a bhakta."

MASTER : "How guileless he is !"

M. went to Dr. Sarkar's house to report Sri Ramakrishna's condition. The doctor talked to M. about Sri Ramakrishna, Mahimacharan, and the other devotees.

DOCTOR : "Mahimacharan didn't bring the book he promised to show me. He said he had forgotten all about it. It is quite possible. I am forgetful too."

M : "He has read a great deal."

DOCTOR : "Then why is he in such a plight ?"

Referring to the Master, the doctor said : "What will a man accomplish with mere bhakti ? He needs jnana too."

M : "Why, the Master says that bhakti comes after jnana. But his conception of jnana and bhakti is quite different from yours. When he says that one obtains bhakti after jnana, he means that first comes the Knowledge of Reality and then bhakti ; first the Knowledge of Brahman and then bhakti ; first the Knowledge of God and then love for Him. When you speak of jnana you mean the knowledge obtained through the senses. The jnana Sri Ramakrishna speaks of cannot be verified by our standards. The Knowledge of Reality cannot be tested by the knowledge obtained through the senses. But your jnana, the knowledge through the senses, can be verified."

The doctor remained silent. Then he referred to the subject of Divine Incarnation.

DOCTOR : "What is this idea of Divine Incarnation ? What is this taking the dust of a man's feet ?"

M : "Why, you say that during your experiments in the laboratory you go into ecstasy when you think of God's creation. Further, you feel the same emotion when you think of man. If that is so, why shouldn't we bow our heads before God ? God dwells in the heart of man."

"According to Hinduism God dwells in all beings. You have not studied this subject much. Since God dwells in all beings, what is wrong in saluting a man ?"

"Sri Ramakrishna says that there is a greater manifestation of God in certain things than in others, as the sun is reflected better by water and by a mirror than by other objects. Water exists everywhere, but is most apparent in a river or lake. We bow down to God and not to man. God is God—not, man is God."

"God cannot be known through reasoning. All depends on faith. Of course, I am repeating to you what Sri Ramakrishna says."

Dr. Sarkar presented M. with one of his books, *The Physiological Basis of Psychology*. He wrote on the first page "As a token of brotherly regards."

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room with the devotees. He was talking to a Christian devotee named Misra. Misra was born of a Christian family in northwestern India and belonged to the Quaker sect. He was thirty-five years old. Though clad in European dress he wore the ochre cloth of a sannyasi under his foreign clothes. Two of his brothers had died on the day fixed for the marriage of one of them, and on that very day Misra had renounced the world.

MISRA : "'It is Rama alone who dwells in all beings.'"

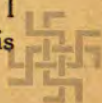
Sri Ramakrishna said to the younger Naren, within Misra's hearing : "Rama is one, but He has a thousand names. He who is called 'God' by the Christians is addressed by the Hindus as Rama, Krishna, Isvara, and by other names. A lake has many ghats. The Hindus drink water at one ghat and call it 'jal' ; the Christians at another, and call it 'water' ; the Mussalmans at a third, and call it 'pani'. Likewise, He who is God to the Christians is Allah to the Mussalmans."

MISRA : "Jesus is not the son of Mary. He is God Himself. (*To the devotees*) Now he (*pointing to Sri Ramakrishna*) is as you see him—again, he is God Himself. You are not able to recognize him. I have seen him before, in visions, though I see him now directly with my eyes. I saw a garden where he was seated on a raised seat. Another person was seated on the ground, but he was not so far advanced."

"There are four door-keepers of God in this country : Tukaram in Bombay, Robert Michael in Kashmir, himself [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] in this part of the country, and another person in eastern Bengal."

MASTER : "Do you see visions ?"

MISRA : "Sir, even when I lived at home I used to see light. Then I had a vision of Jesus. How can I describe that beauty ? How insignificant is the beauty of a woman compared with that beauty !"



After a while Misra took off his trousers and showed the devotees the gerrua loin-cloth that he wore underneath.

Presently Sri Ramakrishna went out on the porch. Returning to the room, he said to the devotees, "I saw him [meaning Misra] standing in a heroic posture." As he uttered these words he went into samadhi. He stood facing the west.

Regaining partial consciousness, he fixed his gaze on Misra and began to laugh. Still in an ecstatic mood, he shook hands with him and laughed again. Taking him by the hands, he said, "You will get what you are seeking."

MISRA (*with folded hands*): "Since that day I have surrendered to you my mind, soul, and body."

Sri Ramakrishna was laughing, still in an ecstatic mood.

The Master resumed his seat. Misra was describing his worldly life to the devotees. He told them how his two brothers were killed when the canopy came down at the time of the marriage.

Sri Ramakrishna asked the devotees to take care of Misra.

Dr. Sarkar arrived. At the sight of him Sri Ramakrishna went into samadhi. When his ecstasy abated a little, he said, "First the bliss of divine inebriation and then the Bliss of Satchidananda, the Cause of the cause."

DOCTOR: "Yes."

MASTER: "I am not unconscious."

The doctor realized that the Master was inebriated with divine bliss. Therefore he said, "No, no! You are quite conscious."

Sri Ramakrishna smiled and said:

I drink no ordinary wine, but Wine of Everlasting Bliss,
As I repeat my Mother Kali's name;
It so intoxicates my mind that people take me to be drunk!
First my guru gives molasses for the making of the Wine;
My longing is the ferment to transform it.
Knowledge, the maker of the Wine, prepares it for me then;
And when it is done, my mind imbibes it from the bottle of the
mantra,
Taking the Mother's name to make it pure.
Drink of this Wine, says Ramprasad, and the four fruits of life are
yours.

As the doctor listened to the words, he too became almost ecstatic. Sri Ramakrishna again went into a deep spiritual mood and placed his foot on the doctor's lap. A few minutes later he became conscious of the outer world and withdrew his foot. He said to the doctor: "Ah, what a splendid thing you said the other day! 'We lie in the lap of God. To whom shall we speak about our illness if not to Him?' If I must pray, I shall certainly pray to Him." As Sri Ramakrishna said these words, his eyes filled with tears. Again he went into ecstasy and said to the doctor, "You are very pure; otherwise I could not have put my foot on your lap." Continuing, he said: "'He alone has peace who has tasted the Bliss of Rama.' What is this world? What is there in it? What is there in money, wealth, honour, or creature comforts? 'O mind, know Rama! Whom else should you know?'"

The devotees were worried to see the Master's repeated ecstasies in this state of ill health. He said, "I shall be quiet if someone sings that song—'The Wine of Heavenly Bliss'."

Narendra was sent for from another room. He sang in his sweet voice :

Be drunk, O mind, be drunk with the Wine of Heavenly Bliss !
Roll on the ground and weep, chanting Hari's sweet name !
Fill the arching heavens with your deep lion roar,
Singing Hari's sweet name ! With both your arms upraised,
Dance in the name of Hari and give His name to all !
Swim day and night in the sea of the bliss of Hari's love ;
Slay desire with His name, and blessed be your life !

MASTER : " And that one—' Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness '." Narendra sang :

Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness waves of ecstatic love arise :
Rapture divine ! Play of God's Bliss !
Oh, how enthralling ! . . .

Narendra sang again :

Meditate, O my mind, on the Lord Hari,
The Stainless One, Pure Spirit through and through.
How peerless is the light that in Him shines !
How soul-bewitching is His wondrous form !
How dear is He to all His devotees !

Ever more beauteous in fresh-blossoming love
That shames the splendour of a million moons,
Like lightning gleams the glory of His form,
Raising erect the hair for very joy.

Worship His feet in the lotus of your heart ;
With mind serene and eyes made radiant
With heavenly love, behold that matchless sight.
Caught in the spell of His love's ecstasy,
Immerse yourself for evermore, O mind,
In Him who is Pure Knowledge and Pure Bliss.

Dr. Sarkar listened to the songs attentively. When the singing was over, he said, " That's a nice one—' Upon the Sea of Blissful Awareness '."

At the sight of the doctor's joy, Sri Ramakrishna said : " The son said to the father, ' Father, you taste a little wine, and after that, if you ask me to give up drinking, I shall do so.' After drinking the wine, the father said : ' Son, you may give it up. I have no objection. But I am certainly not going to give it up myself ! ' (*The doctor and the others laugh.*)

" The other day the Divine Mother showed me two men in a vision. He [meaning the doctor] is one. She also revealed to me that he will have much knowledge ; but it is dry knowledge. (*Smiling, to the doctor*) But you will soften."

Dr. Sarkar remained silent.

Friday, November 6, 1885

It was the day of the Kali Puja, the worship of the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna's Chosen Ideal. At about nine o'clock in the morning the Master, clad in a new cloth, stood in the south room on the second floor of his temporary residence at Syampukur. He had asked M. to offer worship to Siddhesvari at Thanthania, in the central part of Calcutta, with flowers, green coconut, sugar, and other sweets. After bathing in the Ganges, M. had offered the worship and come barefoot to Syampukur. He had brought the prasad with him. Sri Ramakrishna took off his shoes and with great reverence ate a little of the prasad and placed a little on his head.

At the Master's request M. had purchased two books of songs by Ramprasad and Kamalakanta for Dr. Sarkar.

M : "Here are the books of songs by Ramprasad and Kamalakanta."

MASTER : "Force songs like these on the doctor :

How are you trying, O my mind, to know the nature of God ? . . .

Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is ? . . .

O mind, you do not know how to farm !

Fallow lies the field of your life. . . .

Come, let us go for a walk, O mind, to Kali, the Wish-fulfilling Tree. . . ."

M : "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna was pacing the room with M. He had put on his slippers. In spite of his painful illness his face beamed with joy.

MASTER : "And this song is also very good : 'This world is a framework of illusion.'"

M : "Yes, sir."

Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna gave a start. He put aside his slippers and stood still. He was in deep samadhi. It was the day of the Divine Mother's worship. Was that why he frequently went into samadhi ? After a long while he sighed and restrained his emotion as if with great difficulty.

It was about ten o'clock. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on his bed, leaning against the pillow. The devotees sat around him. Ram, Rakhal, Niranjan, Kalipada, M., and many others were present. Sri Ramakrishna was talking about his nephew Hriday.

MASTER : "Hriday is even now clamouring for land. He said to me one day while he was living with me at Dakshineswar, 'Give me a shawl, or I will sue you.' The Divine Mother removed him from Dakshineswar. He pestered the visitors for money. If he had stayed with me all these people could not have come. That is why the Mother removed him. R— also began to act that way. He became querulous. When he was asked to accompany me in a carriage he would hold back. He would be annoyed if the other youngsters came to me. If I went to Calcutta to see them, he would say : 'Why should you bother about them ? Will they renounce the world ?' If I wanted to offer refreshments to the other young boys, I would be afraid of R— and say to him, 'Take some yourself and then give it to them.' I came to

know that he would not stay with me. Thereupon I said to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, don't remove him altogether, like Hriday.' Then I came to know that he was going to Vrindavan. If R— had stayed with me at that time, all these youngsters could not have mixed with me. He left for Vrindavan and these young boys began to visit me frequently."

R—(humbly) : "Sir, that wasn't really in my mind."

RAM (to R—) : "Do you think you understand your mind as well as he understands it ?"

R—remained silent.

MASTER (to R—) : "Why should you feel that way ? I love you more than a father loves his son. . . . Now please keep quiet. . . . You no longer have that attitude."

After a time the devotees went to another room. Sri Ramakrishna sent for R—and said to him, "Did you mind what I said ?"

R—: "No, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna said to M.: "It is the day of the Kali Puja. It is good to make some arrangements for the worship. Please speak to the devotees about it."

M. went to the drawing-room and told the devotees what the Master had said. Kalipada and others busied themselves with the arrangements.

About two o'clock in the afternoon Dr. Sarkar arrived, accompanied by Professor Nilmani. The doctor listened to the report of the illness and prescribed medicine. Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "These two books have been purchased for you." M. handed him the books.

The doctor wanted to hear some songs. At the Master's bidding, M. and another devotee sang :

How are you trying, O my mind, to know the nature of God ?
You are groping like a madman locked in a dark room. . . .

Then they sang :

Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is ?
Even the six darsanas are powerless to reveal Her.
It is She, the scriptures say, that is the Inner Self
Of the yogi, who in Self discovers all his joy ;
She that, of Her own sweet will, inhabits every living thing.

The macrocosm and microcosm rest in the Mother's womb ;
Now do you see how vast it is ? In the Muladhara
The yogi meditates on Her, and in the Sahasrara :
Who but Siva has beheld Her as She really is ?
Within the lotus wilderness She sports beside Her Mate, the Swan.

When man aspires to understand Her, Ramprasad must smile ;
To think of knowing Her, he says, is quite as laughable
As to imagine one can swim across the boundless sea.
But while my mind has understood, alas ! my heart has not ;
Though but a dwarf, it still would strive to make a captive of the
moon.

Again they sang :

O mind, you do not know how to farm !
Fallow lies the field of your life.
If you had only worked it well,
How rich a harvest you might reap ! . . .

Then :

Come, let us go for a walk, O mind, to Kali, the Wish-fulfilling Tree,
And there beneath It gather the four fruits of life. . . .

Dr. Sarkar said to Girish, "That song of yours is very nice—the one about the vina, in the *Life of Buddha*."

At a hint from the Master, Girish and Kalipada sang together :

Behold my vina, my dearly beloved,
My lute of sweetest tone ;
If tenderly you play on it,
The strings will waken, at your touch,
To rarest melodies. . . .

They continued :

We moan for rest, alas ! but rest can never find ;
We know not whence we come, nor where we float away.
Time and again we tread this round of smiles and tears ;
In vain we pine to know whither our pathway leads,
And why we play this empty play. . . .

They sang again :

Hold me fast, O Nitai ! I feel as if I shall pass away !
Bestowing Hari's name on men,
I raised high waves in the river of my love,
And now upon its raging stream I am carried helplessly.
With grief my heart is laden down ;
Alas ! Nitai, to whom shall I speak of it ?
Behold, I am swiftly borne away by the current of man's deep woe.

Then they sang :

Jagai ! Madhai ! Oh, come and dance,
Chanting Hari's name with fervour ! . . .

And finally :

Come one and all ! Take Radha's love !
The high tide of her love flows by ;
It will not last for very long.
Oh, come then ! Come ye, one and all ! . . .

Listening to these songs, two or three of the devotees—among them, Manindra and Latu—went into a spiritual mood. Latu was seated by Niranjan's side. When the singing was over, the Master spoke with the doctor.

The previous day Dr. Pratap Mazumdar had prescribed nux vomica for the Master. Dr. Sarkar was annoyed to hear of it.

DOCTOR : " To give him nux vomica ! Why, I am not dead yet ! "

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Why should you die ? God forbid ! May your avidya die. "

DOCTOR : " I never have any avidya ! "

Dr. Sarkar understood avidya to mean " mistress ".

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Oh, no ! I don't mean that ! In the case of a sannyasi, his mother, Avidya, Ignorance, dies giving birth to a child, Viveka, Discrimination. "

Hariballav arrived. Sri Ramakrishna said, " I feel very happy when I see you. " Hariballav was a man of very humble nature ; he sat on the bare floor and not on the mat. He began to fan the Master. He was the government lawyer at Cuttack. Professor Nilmani sat near them. Sri Ramakrishna did not want to offend him ; casting his glance on the professor, he said, " Oh, what a grand day it is for me ! "

A few minutes later Dr. Sarkar and Professor Nilmani took their leave. Hariballav also departed, saying that he would come again.

It is the dark night of the new moon. At seven o'clock the devotees make arrangements for the worship of Kali in Sri Ramakrishna's room on the second floor. Flowers, sandal-paste, bel-leaves, red hibiscus, rice pudding, and various sweets and other articles of worship are placed in front of the Master. The devotees are sitting around him. There are present, among others, Sarat, Sashi, Ram, Girish, Chunilal, M., Rakhal, Nirnanjan, and the younger Naren.

Sri Ramakrishna asks a devotee to bring some incense. A few minutes later he offers all the articles to the Divine Mother. M. is seated close to him. Looking at M., he says to the devotees, " Meditate a little. " The devotees close their eyes.

Presently Girish offers a garland of flowers at Sri Ramakrishna's feet. M. offers flowers and sandal-paste. Rakhal, Ram, and the other devotees follow him.

Nirnanjan offers a flower at Sri Ramakrishna's feet, crying : " Brahmayi ! Brahmayi ! " and prostrates himself before him, touching the Master's feet with his head. The devotees cry out, " Jai Ma ! ", " Hail to the Mother ! "

In the twinkling of an eye Sri Ramakrishna goes into deep samadhi. An amazing transformation takes place in the Master before the very eyes of the devotees. His face shines with a heavenly light. His two hands are raised in the posture of granting boons and giving assurance to the devotees ; it is the posture one sees in images of the Divine Mother. His body is motionless ; he has no consciousness of the outer world. He sits facing the north. Is the Divine Mother of the Universe manifesting Herself through his person ? Speechless with wonder, the devotees look intently at Sri Ramakrishna, who appears to them to be the embodiment of the Divine Mother Herself.

The devotees begin to sing hymns, one of them leading and the rest following in chorus.

Girish sings :

Who is this Woman with the thick black hair,
Shining amidst the assembly of the gods ?
Who is She, whose feet are like crimson lotuses
Planted on Siva's chest ?
Who is She, whose toe-nails shine like the fullmoon,
Whose legs burn with the brightness of the sun ?
Who is She, who now speaks soft and smiles on us,
And now fills all the quarters of the sky
With shouts of terrible laughter ?

Again

O Mother, Saviour of the helpless, Thou the Slayer of sin !
In Thee do the three gunas dwell—sattva, rajas, and tamas.
Thou dost create the world ; Thou dost sustain it and destroy it ;
Binding Thyself with attributes, Thou yet transcendest them ;
For Thou, O Mother, art the All. . . .

Behari sings :

O Syama, Thou who dost sit upon a corpse !
I beg Thee, hear my heart's most fervent prayer :
As my last breath forsakes this mortal flesh,
Reveal Thyself within my heart !
Then, in my mind, from forest and from grove
I shall gather Thee red hibiscus flowers,
And, scenting them with the sandal-paste of Love,
Shall lay them at Thy Lotus Feet.

M. sings with the other devotees :

O Mother, all is done after Thine own sweet will ;
Thou art in truth self-willed, Redeemer of mankind !
Thou workest Thine own work ; men only call it theirs. . . .

They sing again :

All things are possible, O Mother, through Thy grace ;
Obstacles mountain high Thou makest to melt away.
Thou Home of Bliss ! To all Thou givest peace and joy ;
Why then should I be made to suffer fruitlessly,
Brooding on the success or failure of my deeds ?

And again :

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,
Do not deprive Thy worthless child of bliss !
My mind knows nothing but Thy Lotus Feet.
The King of Death scowls at me terribly ;
Tell me, Mother, what shall I say to him ? . . .

They conclude :

In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;
Therefore the yogis meditate in a dark mountain cave. . . .

Gradually Sri Ramakrishna came back to the consciousness of the outer world. He asked the devotees to sing "O Mother Syama, full of the waves of drunkenness divine". They sang :

O Mother Syama, full of the waves of drunkenness divine
Who knows how Thou dost sport in the world ?
Thy fun and frolic and Thy glances put to shame the god of
love. . . .

When this song was over, Sri Ramakrishna asked the devotees to sing "Behold my Mother playing with Siva". The devotees sang :

Behold my Mother playing with Siva, lost in an ecstasy of joy !
Drunk with a draught of celestial wine, She reels, and yet She does
not fall. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna tasted a little pudding to make the devotees happy, but immediately went into deep ecstasy.

A few minutes later the devotees prostrated themselves before the Master and went into the drawing-room. There they enjoyed the prasad.

It was nine o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna sent word to the devotees, asking them to go to Surendra's house to participate in the worship of Kali.

They arrived at Surendra's house on Simla Street and were received very cordially. Surendra conducted them to the drawing-room on the second floor. The house was filled with a festive atmosphere and a veritable mart of joy was created with the songs and music of the devotees. It was very late at night when they returned to their homes after enjoying the sumptuous feast given by Surendra, the Master's beloved disciple.



XLIX

THE MASTER AT COSSIPORE

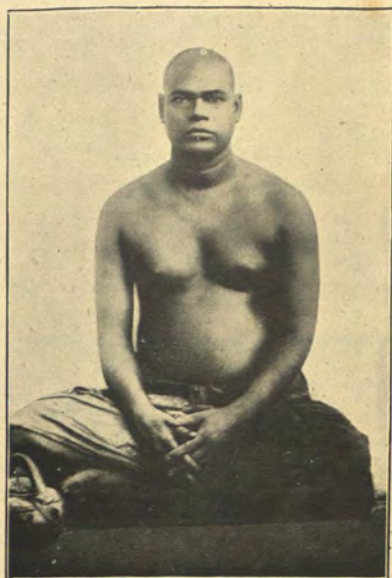
Wednesday, December 23, 1885

ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, Sri Ramakrishna was moved to a beautiful house at Cossipore, a suburb of Calcutta. The house was situated in a garden covering about five acres of land and abounding in fruit-trees and flowering plants. Here the final curtain fell on the Master's life.

At Cossipore he set himself with redoubled energy to the completion of the work of spiritual ministration he had begun long before at Dakshineswar. Realizing that the end of his physical life was approaching, he gave away his spiritual treasures without stint to one and all. He was like one of those fruit-sellers who bring their fruit to the market-place, bargain at first about the prices, but then toward sunset, when the market is about to close, give away the fruit indiscriminately. Here his disciples saw the greatest manifestation of his spiritual powers. Here they saw the fulfilment of his prophecies about his own end: "I shall make the whole thing public before I go." "When people in large numbers come to know and whisper about the greatness of this body, then the Mother will take it back." "The devotees will be sifted into inner and outer circles toward the end." And so on. Here he predicted that a band of young disciples, with Narendranath as their leader, would in due course renounce the world and devote themselves to the realization of God and the service of humanity.

The main building at Cossipore had two storeys, with three rooms below and two above. The Master occupied the central hall of the upper storey; a small room to the left was used at night by his attendants. To the right of the hall was an open balcony where Sri Ramakrishna sometimes sat or walked. On the ground floor, a hall just below the Master's and a small room to the right of it were used by the devotees, and a small room to the extreme left was occupied by the Holy Mother. In the garden compound were some outbuildings, two reservoirs, and pleasant walks. Sri Ramakrishna breathed more freely in the open air of the new place.

Almost all the devotees had gathered by this time. They had started coming to him in 1881. By the end of 1884 Sarat and Sashi had become known to the Master, and since their college examinations in the middle of 1885 they had been visiting him almost daily. Girish Ghosh had first met the Master



SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA
(SASHI)



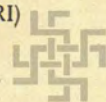
SWAMI SIVANANDA (TARAK)



SWAMI SARADANANDA (SARAT)



SWAMI TURIYANANDA (HARI)



in September 1884 at the Star Theatre. Since the beginning of the following December he had been a constant visitor. And it was during the latter part of December 1884 that Sarada Prasanna first visited the Master at the Dakshineswar temple. Subodh and Kshirode first visited him in August 1885.

The young devotees had taken up their quarters at the garden house to tend Sri Ramakrishna, although many of them visited their own homes every now and then. The householders came to see the Master almost every day, and some of them occasionally spent the night.

On the morning of December 23 Sri Ramakrishna gave unrestrained expression to his love for the devotees. He said to Niranjan, "You are my father : I shall sit on your lap." Touching Kalipada's chest, he said, "May your inner spirit be awakened!" He stroked Kalipada's chin affectionately and said, "Whoever has sincerely called on God or performed his daily religious devotions will certainly come here." In the morning two ladies received his special blessing. In a state of samadhi he touched their hearts with his feet. They shed tears of joy. One of them said to him, weeping, "You are so kind!" His love this day really broke all bounds. He wanted to bless Gopal of Sinthi and said to a devotee, "Bring Gopal here."

It was evening. Sri Ramakrishna was absorbed in contemplation of the Mother of the Universe. After a while he began to talk very softly with some of the devotees. Kali, Chunilal, M., Navagopal, Sashi, Niranjan, and a few others were present.

MASTER (to M.) : "Buy a stool for me. What will it cost?"

M : "Between two and three rupees."

MASTER : "If a small wooden seat costs only twelve annas, why should you have to pay so much for a stool?"

M : "Perhaps it won't cost so much."

MASTER : "Tomorrow is Thursday. The latter part of the afternoon is inauspicious. Can't you come before three o'clock?"

M : "Yes, sir. I shall."

MASTER : "Well, can you tell how long it will take me to recover from this illness?"

M : "It has been aggravated a little and will take some days."

MASTER : "How long?"

M : "Perhaps five to six months."

Hearing this, Sri Ramakrishna became impatient, like a child, and said : "So long? What do you mean?"

M : "I mean, sir, for complete recovery."

MASTER : "Oh, that! I am relieved. Can you explain one thing? How is it that in spite of all these visions, all this ecstasy and samadhi, I am so ill?"

M : "Your suffering is no doubt great; but it has a deep meaning."

MASTER : "What is it?"

M : "A change is coming over your mind. It is being directed toward the formless aspect of God. Even your 'ego of Knowledge' is vanishing."

MASTER : "That is true. My teaching of others is coming to an end. I cannot give any more instruction. I see that everything is Rama Himself. And sometimes I say to myself, 'Whom shall I teach?' You see, because I am living in a rented house many kinds of devotees are coming here. I hope I shall not have to put up a 'signboard', like Shashadhar or Krishnaprasanna Sen,¹ announcing my lectures." (*The Master and M. laugh.*)

M : "There is yet another purpose in this illness. It is the final sifting of disciples. The devotees have achieved in these few days what they could not have realized by five years' tapasya. Their love and devotion are growing by leaps and bounds."

MASTER : "That may be true ; but Niranjan went back home. (*To Niranjan*) Please tell me how you feel."

NIRANJAN : "Formerly I loved you, no doubt, but now it is impossible for me to live without you."

M : "One day I found out how great these young men were."

MASTER : "Where?"

M : "Sir, one day I stood in a corner of the house at Syampukur and watched the devotees. I clearly saw that every one of them had made his way here through almost insurmountable obstacles and given himself over to your service."

As Sri Ramakrishna listened to these words he became abstracted. He was silent a few moments. Presently he went into samadhi.

Regaining consciousness of the outer world, he said to M. : "I saw everything passing from form to formlessness. I want to tell you all the things I saw, but I cannot. Well, this tendency of mine toward the formless is only a sign of my nearing dissolution. Isn't that so?"

M. (*wonderingly*) : "It may be."

MASTER : "Even now I am seeing the Formless Indivisible Satchidananda—just like that. . . . But I have suppressed my feelings with great difficulty.

"What you said about the sifting of disciples was right : this illness is showing who belong to the inner circle and who to the outer. Those who are living here, renouncing the world, belong to the inner circle ; and those who pay occasional visits and ask, 'How are you, sir?' belong to the outer circle.

"Didn't you notice Bhavanath ? The other day he came to Syampukur dressed as a bridegroom and asked me, 'How are you?' I haven't seen him since. I show him love for Narendra's sake, but he is not in my thought any more.

(*To M.*) "When God assumes a human body for the sake of His devotees, many of His devotees accompany Him to this earth. Some of them belong to the inner circle, some to the outer circle, and some become the suppliers of His physical needs.

"I experienced one of my first ecstasies when I was ten or eleven years old, as I was going through a meadow to the shrine of Visalakshi. What a vision ! I became completely unconscious of the outer world.

¹ Shashadhar and Krishnaprasanna were two well-known Hindu preachers, contemporaries of Sri Ramakrishna.

"I was twenty-two or twenty-three when the Divine Mother one day asked me in the Kali temple, 'Do you want to be *Akshara*?' I didn't know what the word meant. I asked Haladhari about it. He said, '*Kshara* means jiva, living being; *Akshara* means *Paramatman*, the Supreme Soul.'

"At the hour of the evening worship in the Kali temple I would climb to the roof of the kuthi and cry out: 'O devotees, where are you all? Come to me soon! I shall die of the company of worldly people!' I told all this to the 'Englishmen'. They said it was all an illusion of my mind. 'Perhaps it is', I said to myself, and became calm. But now it is all coming true; the devotees are coming.

"The Divine Mother also showed me in a vision the five suppliers of my needs; first, Mathur Babu, and second, Sambhu Mallick, whom I had not then met. I had a vision of a fair-skinned man with a cap on his head. Many days later, when I first met Sambhu, I recalled that vision; I realized that it was he whom I had seen in that ecstatic state. I haven't yet found out the three other suppliers of my wants. But they were all of a fair complexion. Surendra looks like one of them.

"When I attained this state of God-Consciousness, a person exactly resembling myself thoroughly shook my Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna nerves. He licked with his tongue each of the lotuses of the six centres, and those drooping lotuses at once turned their faces upward. And at last the Sahasrara lotus became full-blown.

"The Divine Mother used to reveal to me the nature of the devotees before their coming. I saw with these two eyes—not in a trance—the kirtan party of Chaitanya going from the banyan-tree to the bakul-tree in the Panchavati. I saw Balaram in the procession and also, I think, yourself [meaning M.]. Chuni's spiritual consciousness and yours, too, have been awakened by frequent visits to me. In a vision I saw that Sashi and Sarat had been among the followers of Christ.

"Under the banyan-tree in the Panchavati I had a vision of a child. Hriday said to me, 'Then a son will soon be born to you.' I said to him: 'But I regard all women as mother. How can I have a son?' That child is Rakhal.

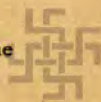
"I said to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, since You have placed me in this condition, provide me with a rich man.' That is why Mathur served me for fourteen years.² And in how many different ways! At my request he arranged a special store-room for the sadhus. He provided me with carriage and palanquin. And whatever I asked him to give to anyone, he gave. The Brahmani³ identified him with Prataprudra.⁴

"Vijay had a vision of this form [meaning himself]. How do you account for it? Vijay said to me, 'I touched it exactly as I am touching you now.'

² From 1858 to 1871.

³ The brahmin woman who was one of the Master's spiritual teachers.

⁴ A king of Orissa and a devoted follower of Chaitanyadeva, whom he served with the utmost love and faithfulness.



"Latu counted thirty-one devotees in all. That's not many. But a few more are becoming devotees through Vijay and Kedar.

"It was revealed to me in a vision that during my last days I should have to live on pudding. During my present illness my wife was one day feeding me with pudding. I burst into tears and said, 'Is this my living on pudding near the end, and so painfully?'"

Monday, January 4, 1886

It was the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the moon. At four o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room. He told M. that Ram Chatterji had come from the Kali temple at Dakshineswar to inquire about his health. He asked M. whether it was now very cold at the temple garden.

Narendra arrived. Now and then the Master looked at him and smiled. It appeared to M. that that day the Master's love for his beloved disciple was boundless. He indicated to M. by a sign that Narendra had wept. Then he remained quiet. Again he indicated that Narendra had cried all the way from home.

No one spoke. Narendra broke the silence.

NARENDRA : "I have been thinking of going there today."

MASTER : "Where?"

NARENDRA : "To Dakshineswar. I intend to light a fire under the bel-tree and meditate."

MASTER : "No, the authorities of the powder-magazine will not allow it. The Panchavati is a nice place. Many sadhus have practised japa and meditation there. But it is very cold there. The place is dark, too."

Again for a few moments all sat in silence.

MASTER (to Narendra, smiling) : "Won't you continue your studies?"

NARENDRA (looking at the Master and M.) : "I shall feel greatly relieved if I find a medicine that will make me forget all I have studied."

The elder Gopal, who was also in the room, said, "I shall accompany Narendra."

Kalipada Ghosh had brought a box of grapes for Sri Ramakrishna; it lay beside the Master. The Master gave Narendra a few and poured the rest on the floor for the devotees to pick up.

It was evening. Narendra was sitting in a room downstairs. He was smoking and describing to M. the yearning of his soul. No one else was with them.

NARENDRA : "I was meditating here last Saturday when suddenly I felt a peculiar sensation in my heart."

M : "It was the awakening of the Kundalini."

NARENDRA : "Probably it was. I clearly perceived the Ida and the Pingala nerves. I asked Hazra to feel my chest. Yesterday I saw him [meaning the Master] upstairs and told him about it. I said to him : 'All the others have had their realization; please give me some. All have succeeded; shall I alone remain unsatisfied?'"

M : "What did he say to you ?"

NARENDRA : "He said : 'Why don't you settle your family affairs first and then come to me ? You will get everything. What do you want ?' I replied, 'It is my desire to remain absorbed in samadhi continually for three or four days, only once in a while coming down to the sense plane to eat a little food.' Thereupon he said to me : 'You are a very small-minded person. There is a state higher even than that. "All that exists art Thou"—it is you who sing that song.'"

M : "Yes, he always says that after coming down from samadhi one sees that it is God Himself who has become the universe, the living beings, and all that exists. The Isvarakotis alone can attain that state. An ordinary man can at the most attain samadhi ; but he cannot come down from that state."

NARENDRA : "He [the Master] said : 'Settle your family affairs and then come to me. You will attain a state higher than samadhi.' I went home this morning. My people scolded me, saying : 'Why do you wander about like a vagabond ? Your law examination is near at hand and you are not paying any attention to your studies. You wander about aimlessly.'"

M : "Did your mother say anything ?"

NARENDRA : "No. She was very eager to feed me. She gave me venison. I ate a little, though I didn't feel like eating meat."

M : "And then ?"

NARENDRA : "I went to my study at my grandmother's. As I tried to read I was seized with a great fear, as if studying were a terrible thing. My heart struggled within me. I burst into tears : I never wept so bitterly in my life. I left my books and ran away. I ran along the streets. My shoes slipped from my feet—I didn't know where. I ran past a haystack and got hay all over me. I kept on running along the road to Cossipore."

Narendra remained silent a few minutes and then resumed.

NARENDRA : "Since reading the *Vivekachudamani* I have felt very much depressed. In it Sankaracharya says that only through great tapasya and good fortune does one acquire these three things : a human birth, the desire for liberation, and refuge with a great soul. I said to myself : 'I have surely gained all these three. As a result of great tapasya I have been born a human being ; through great tapasya, again, I have the desire for liberation ; and through great tapasya I have secured the companionship of such a great soul.'"

M : "Ah !"

NARENDRA : "I have no more taste for the world. I do not relish the company of those who live in the world—of course, with the exception of one or two devotees."

Narendra became silent again. A fire of intense renunciation was burning within him. His soul was restless for the vision of God. He resumed the conversation.

NARENDRA (to M.) : "You have found peace, but my soul is restless. You are blessed indeed."

M. did not reply, but sat in silence. He said to himself, "Sri Ramakrishna said that one must pant and pine for God; only then may one have the vision of Him."

Immediately after dusk M. went upstairs. He found Sri Ramakrishna asleep.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening. Niranjan and Sashi were sitting near the Master. He was awake. Every now and then he talked of Narendra.

MASTER: "How wonderful Narendra's state of mind is! You see, this very Narendra did not believe in the forms of God. And now you see how his soul is panting for God! You know that story of the man who asked his guru how God could be realized. The guru said to him: 'Come with me. I shall show you how one can realize God.' Saying this, he took the disciple to a lake and held his hand under the water. After a short time he released the disciple and asked him, 'How did you feel?' 'I was dying for a breath of air!' said the disciple.

"When the soul longs and yearns for God like that, then you will know that you do not have long to wait for His vision. The rosy colour on the eastern horizon shows that the sun will soon rise."

This day Sri Ramakrishna's illness was worse. In spite of much suffering he said many things about Narendra—though mostly by means of signs.

At night Narendra left for Dakshineswar. It was very dark, being the night of the new moon. He was accompanied by one or two devotees. M. spent the night at the Cossipore garden. He dreamt that he was seated in an assembly of sannyasis.

Tuesday, January 5, 1886

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on his bed and talking to M. No one else was in the room. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

MASTER: "If Kshirode makes a pilgrimage to Gangasagar, then please buy a blanket for him."

M: "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna was silent a few minutes. Then he continued.

MASTER: "Well, can you tell me what is happening to these youngsters? Some are running off to Puri and some to Gangasagar. All have renounced their homes. Look at Narendra! When a man is seized with the spirit of intense renunciation, he regards the world as a deep well and his relatives as venomous cobras."

M: "Yes, sir. Life in the world is full of suffering."

MASTER: "Yes, it is the suffering of hell—and that from the very moment of birth! Don't you see what a trouble one's wife and children are?"

M: "Yes, sir. You yourself said: 'These youngsters⁵ have no relationship whatsoever with the world. They owe nothing to the world, nor do they expect anything from it. It is the sense of obligation that entangles a man in the world.'"

⁵ The Master had meant his young disciples.

MASTER : "Don't you see how Niranjana is ? His attitude toward the world is this : 'Here, take what is thine, and give me what is mine.' That is all. He has no further relationship with the world. There is nothing to pull him from behind.

" 'Woman and gold' alone is the world. Don't you see that if you have money you want to lay it by ? "

M. burst out laughing. Sri Ramakrishna also laughed.

M : "One thinks a great deal before taking the money out. (*Both laugh.*) But once you said at Dakshineswar that it is quite different if one is able to live in the world free from the three gunas."

MASTER : "Yes—like a child !"

M : "Yes, sir. But it is exceedingly difficult ; it requires tremendous power."

Sri Ramakrishna remained silent.

M : "Yesterday they went to Dakshineswar to meditate. I had a dream."

MASTER : "What did you dream ?"

M : "I dreamt that Narendra and some others had become sannyasis. They were sitting around a lighted fire. I too was there. They were smoking tobacco and blowing out puffs of smoke. I told them that I could smell hemp."⁶

MASTER : "Mental renunciation is the essential thing. That, too, makes one a sannyasi."

Sri Ramakrishna kept silent a few minutes and then went on.

MASTER : "But one must set fire to one's desires. Then alone can one succeed."

M : "You said to the pundit of the Marwaris from Burrabazar that you had the desire for bhakti. Isn't the desire for bhakti to be counted as a desire ?"

MASTER : "No, just as hincle greens are not to be counted as greens. Hincle restrains the secretion of bile.

"Well, all my joy, all my ecstasy—where are they now ?"

M : "Perhaps you are now in the state of mind that the *Gita* describes as beyond the three gunas. Sattva, rajas, and tamas are performing their own functions, and you yourself are unattached—unattached even to sattva."

MASTER : "Yes, the Divine Mother has put me into the state of a child. Tell me, won't the body live through this illness ?"

The Master and M. became silent. Narendra entered the room. He was going home to settle his family affairs.

Since his father's death Narendra had been in great distress about his mother and brothers. Now and then they had been threatened with starvation. Narendra was the family's only hope : they expected him to earn money and feed them. But Narendra could not appear for his law examination ; he was passing through a state of intense renunciation. He was going to Calcutta that day to make some provision for the family. A friend had agreed to lend him one hundred rupees. That would take care of the family for three months.

NARENDRA : "I am going home. (*To M.*) I shall visit Mahimacharan on the way. Will you come with me ?"

⁶ Many wandering sannyasis smoke Indian hemp.

M. did not want to go. Looking at M., Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra, "Why?"

NARENDRA : "I am going that way ; so I shall stop at Mahima's place and have a chat with him."

Sri Ramakrishna looked at Narendra intently.

NARENDRA : "A friend who comes here said he would lend me a hundred rupees. That will take care of the family for three months. I am going home to make that arrangement."

Sri Ramakrishna remained silent and looked at M.

M. (to Narendra) : "No, you go ahead. I shall go later."

Thursday, March 11, 1886

It was eight o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna was in the big hall on the second floor. Narendra, Sashi, M., Sarat, and the elder Gopal were in the room. Sri Ramakrishna was lying down. Sarat stood by his bed and fanned him. The Master was speaking about his illness.

MASTER : "If some of you go to Dakshineswar and see Bholanath, he will give you a medicinal oil and also tell you how to apply it."

THE ELDER GOPAL : "Then we shall go for the oil tomorrow morning."

M : "If someone goes this evening he can bring the oil."

SASHI : "I can go."

MASTER (pointing to Sarat) : "He may go."

After a time Sarat set out for Dakshineswar to get the oil from Bholanath.

The devotees, sitting around Sri Ramakrishna's bed, were silent. Suddenly the Master sat up. He spoke to Narendranath.

MASTER : "Brahman is without taint. The three gunas are in Brahman, but It is Itself untainted by them."

"You may find both good and bad smells in the air ; but the air itself is unaffected."

"Sankaracharya was going along a street in Benares. An outcaste carrying a load of meat suddenly touched him. 'What!' said Sankara. 'You have touched me!' 'Revered sir,' said the outcaste, 'I have not touched you nor have you touched me. The Atman is above all contamination, and you are that Pure Atman.'"

"Of Brahman and maya, the jnani rejects maya."

"Maya is like a veil. You see, I hold this towel between you and the lamp. You no longer see the light of the lamp."

Sri Ramakrishna put the towel between himself and the devotees.

MASTER : "Now you cannot see my face any more. As Ramprasad said, 'Raise the curtain, and behold!'"

"The bhakta, however, does not ignore maya. He worships Mahamaya. Taking refuge in Her, he says : 'O Mother, please stand aside from my path. Only if You step out of my way shall I have the Knowledge of Brahman.' The jnanis explain away all three states—waking, dream, and deep sleep. But the bhaktas accept them all. As long as there is the ego, everything else exists."

So long as the 'I' exists, the bhakta sees that it is God who has become maya, the universe, the living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles."

Narendra and the other devotees sat silently listening.

MASTER : " But the theory of maya is dry. (To Narendra) Repeat what I said."

NARENDRA : " Maya is dry."

Sri Ramakrishna affectionately stroked Narendra's face and hands, and said : " Your face and hands show that you are a bhakta. But the jnani has different features ; they are dry.

" Even after attaining jnana, the jnani can live in the world, retaining vidyamaya, that is to say, bhakti, compassion, renunciation, and such virtues. This serves him two purposes : first, the teaching of men, and second, the enjoyment of divine bliss. If a jnani remains silent, merged in samadhi, then men's hearts will not be illumined. Therefore Sankaracharya kept the 'ego of Knowledge'. And further, a jnani lives as a devotee, in the company of bhaktas, in order to enjoy and drink deep of the Bliss of God.

" The 'ego of Knowledge' and the 'ego of Devotion' can do no harm ; it is the 'wicked I' that is harmful. After realizing God a man becomes like a child. There is no harm in the 'ego of a child'. It is like the reflection of a face in a mirror : the reflection cannot call names. Or it is like a burnt rope, which appears to be a rope but disappears at the slightest puff. The ego that has been burnt in the fire of Knowledge cannot injure anybody. It is an ego only in name.

" Returning to the relative plane after reaching the Absolute is like coming back to this shore of a river after going to the other side. Such a return to the relative plane is for the teaching of men and for enjoyment—participation in the divine sport in the world."

Sri Ramakrishna was talking in a very low voice. Addressing the devotees, he said : " The body is so ill, but the mind is free from avidyamaya. Let me tell you, there is no thought in my mind of Ramlal or home or wife. But I have been worrying about Purna, that kayastha boy. I am not in the least anxious about the others.

" It is God alone who has kept this vidyamaya in me, for the good of men, for the welfare of the devotees.

" But if one retains vidyamaya one comes back to this world. The Avatars keep this vidyamaya. So long as a man has even the slightest desire, he must be born again and again. When he gets rid of all desires, then he is liberated. But the bhaktas do not seek liberation.

" If a person dies in Benares he attains liberation ; he is not born again. Liberation is the goal of the jnanis."

NARENDRA : " The other day we went to visit Mahimacharan."

MASTER (smiling) : " Well ?"

NARENDRA : " I have never before met such a dry jnani."

MASTER (smiling) : " What was the matter ?"

NARENDRA : " He asked us to sing. Gangadhar sang :

Radha is restored to life by hearing her Krishna's name.
She looks about ; in front of her she sees a tamala tree.



"On hearing this song, Mahimacharan said : 'Why such songs here ? I don't care for love and all that nonsense. Besides, I live here with my wife and children. Why all these songs here ?'"

MASTER (to M.) : "Do you see how afraid he is ?"

Sunday, March 14, 1886

Sri Ramakrishna sat facing the north in the large room upstairs. It was evening. He was very ill. Narendra and Rakhal were gently massaging his feet. M. sat near by. The Master, by a sign, asked him, too, to stroke his feet. M. obeyed.

The previous Sunday the devotees had observed Sri Ramakrishna's birthday with worship and prayer. His birthday the year before had been observed at Dakshineswar with great pomp ; but this year, on account of his illness, the devotees were very sad and there was no festivity at all.

The Holy Mother busied herself day and night in the Master's service. Among the young disciples, Narendra, Rakhal, Nirranjan, Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Jogin, Latu, and Kali had been staying with him at the garden house. The older devotees visited him daily, and some of them occasionally spent the night there.

That day Sri Ramakrishna was feeling very ill. At midnight the moonlight flooded the garden, but it could wake no response in the devotees' hearts. They were drowned in a sea of grief. They felt that they were living in a beautiful city besieged by a hostile army. Perfect silence reigned everywhere. Nature was still, except for the gentle rustling of the leaves at the touch of the south wind. Sri Ramakrishna lay awake. One or two devotees sat near him in silence. At times he seemed to doze.

M. was seated by his side. Sri Ramakrishna asked him by a sign to come nearer. The sight of his suffering was unbearable. In a very soft voice and with great difficulty he said to M. :

"I have gone on suffering so much for fear of making you all weep. But if you all say : 'Oh, there is so much suffering ! Let the body die', then I may give up the body."

These words pierced the devotees' hearts. And he who was their father, mother, and protector had uttered these words ! What could they say ? All sat in silence. Some thought, "Is this another crucifixion—the sacrifice of the body for the sake of the devotees ?"

It was the dead of night. Sri Ramakrishna's illness was taking a turn for the worse. The devotees wondered what was to be done. One of them left for Calcutta. That very night Girish came to the garden house with two physicians, Upendra and Navagopal.

The devotees sat near the Master. He felt a little better and said to them : "The illness is of the body. That is as it should be ; I see that the body is made of the five elements."

Turning to Girish, he said : "I am seeing many forms of God. Among them I find this one also [meaning his own form]."

Monday, March 15, 1886

About seven o'clock in the morning Sri Ramakrishna felt a little better. He talked to the devotees, sometimes in a whisper, sometimes by signs. Narendra, Rakhal, Latu, M., Gopal of Sinthi, and others were in the room. They sat speechless and looked grave, thinking of the Master's suffering of the previous night.

MASTER (*to the devotees*): "Do you know what I see right now? I see that it is God Himself who has become all this. It seems to me that men and other living beings are made of leather, and that it is God Himself who, dwelling inside these leather cases, moves the hands, the feet, the heads. I had a similar vision once before, when I saw houses, gardens, roads, men, cattle—all made of One Substance; it was as if they were all made of wax.

"I see that it is God Himself who has become the block, the executioner, and the victim for the sacrifice."

As he describes this staggering experience, in which he realizes in full the identity of all within the One Being, he is overwhelmed with emotion and exclaims, "Ah! What a vision!"

Immediately Sri Ramakrishna goes into samadhi. He completely forgets his body and the outer world. The devotees are bewildered. Not knowing what to do, they sit still.

Presently the Master regains partial consciousness of the world and says: "Now I have no pain at all. I am my old self again."

The devotees are amazed to watch this state of the Master, beyond pleasure and pain, weal and woe.

He casts his glance on Latu and says: "There is Loto. He bends his head, resting it on the palm of his hand. I see that it is God Himself who rests His head on His hand."

Sri Ramakrishna looks at the devotees and his love for them wells up in a thousand streams. Like a mother showing her tenderness to her children he touches the faces and chins of Rakhal and Narendra.

A few minutes later he says to M., "If the body were to be preserved a few days more, many people would have their spirituality awakened."

He pauses a few minutes.

"But this is not to be. This time the body will not be preserved."

The devotees eagerly await the Master's next words.

"Such is not the will of God. This time the body will not be preserved, lest, finding me guileless and foolish, people should take advantage of me, and lest I, guileless and foolish as I am, should give away everything to everybody. In this Kaliyuga, you see, people are averse to meditation and japa."

RAKHAL (*tenderly*): "Please speak to God that He may preserve your body some time more."

MASTER: "That depends on God's will."

NARENDRA: "Your will and God's will have become one."

Sri Ramakrishna remains silent. He appears to be thinking about something.



MASTER (to Narendra, Rakhal, and the others): "And nothing will happen if I speak to God. Now I see that I and the Mother have become one. For fear of her sister-in-law, Radha said to Krishna, 'Please dwell in my heart.' But when, later on, she became very eager for a vision of Krishna—so eager that her heart pined and panted for her Beloved—He would not come out."

RAKHAL (in a low voice, to the devotees): "He is referring to God's Incarnation as Gauranga."⁷

The devotees sit silently in the room. Sri Ramakrishna looks at them tenderly. Then he places his hand on his heart. He is about to speak.

MASTER (to Narendra and the others): "There are two persons in this. One, the Divine Mother—"

He pauses. The devotees eagerly look at him to hear what he will say next.

MASTER: "Yes, one is She. And the other is Her devotee. It is the devotee who broke his arm, and it is the devotee who is now ill. Do you understand?"

The devotees sit without uttering a word.

MASTER: "Alas! To whom shall I say all this? Who will understand me?"

Pausing a few moments, he says:

"God becomes man, an Avatar, and comes to earth with His devotees. And the devotees leave the world with Him."

RAKHAL: "Therefore we pray that you may not go away and leave us behind."

Sri Ramakrishna smiles and says:

"A band of minstrels suddenly appears, dances, and sings, and it departs in the same sudden manner. They come and they return, but none recognizes them."

The Master and the devotees smile.

After a few minutes he says:

"Suffering is inevitable when one assumes a human body.

"Every now and then I say to myself, 'May I not have to come back to earth again!' But there is something else. After enjoying sumptuous feasts outside, one does not relish cheap home cooking.

"Besides, this assuming of a human body is for the sake of the devotees."

Sri Ramakrishna looks at Narendra very tenderly.

MASTER (to Narendra): "An outcaste was carrying a lead of meat. Sankaracharya, after bathing in the Ganges, was passing by. Suddenly the outcaste touched him. Sankara said sharply: 'What! You touched me!' 'Revered sir,' he replied, 'I have not touched you nor have you touched me. Reason with me: Are you the body, the mind, or the buddhi? Analyse what

⁷ According to the Bengal school of Vaishnavism Sri Krishna wanted to taste and enjoy His own sweetness as Radha did. But this could not be done to the fullest extent unless Krishna were infatuated with Himself, as Radha had been. Accordingly He assumed a form in which all the aspects of the Krishna of Vrindavan and those of Radha coexisted; and in this aspect Krishna enjoyed His own charm and sweetness. This form is known as Sri Gauranga, who was a blending of Radha and Krishna.

you are. You are the Pure Atman, unattached and free, unaffected by the three gunas—sattva, rajas, and tamas.

"Do you know what Brahman is like? It is like air. Good and bad smells are carried by the air, but the air itself is unaffected."

NARENDRA : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "He is beyond the gunas and maya—beyond both the 'maya of knowledge' and the 'maya of ignorance.' 'Woman and gold' is the 'maya of ignorance'. Knowledge, renunciation, devotion, and other spiritual qualities are the splendours of the 'maya of knowledge'. Sankaracharya kept this 'maya of knowledge'; and that you and these others feel concerned about me is also due to this 'maya of knowledge'.

"Following the 'maya of knowledge' step by step, one attains the Knowledge of Brahman. This 'maya of knowledge' may be likened to the last few steps of the stairs. Next is the roof. Some, even after reaching the roof, go up and down the stairs; that is to say, some, even after realizing God, retain the 'ego of Knowledge'. They retain this in order to teach others, taste divine bliss, and sport with the devotees of God."

NARENDRA : "Some people get angry with me when I speak of renunciation."

MASTER (*in a whisper*) : "Renunciation is necessary.

(*Pointing to his different limbs*) "If one thing is placed upon another, you must remove the one to get the other. Can you get the second thing without removing the first?"

NARENDRA : "True, sir."

MASTER (*in a whisper, to Narendra*) : "When one sees everything filled with God alone, does one see anything else?"

NARENDRA : "Must one renounce the world?"

MASTER : "Didn't I say just now : 'When one sees everything filled with God alone, does one see anything else?' Does one then see any such thing as the world?"

"I mean mental renunciation. Not one of those who have come here is a worldly person. Some of them had a slight desire—for instance, a fancy for woman. (*Rakhal and M. smile.*) And that desire has been fulfilled."

The Master looks at Narendra tenderly and becomes filled with love. Looking at the devotees, he says, "Grand!"

With a smile Narendra asks the Master, "What is grand?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "I see that preparations are going on for a grand renunciation."

Narendra and the devotees look silently at the Master. Rakhal resumes the conversation.

RAKHAL (*smiling, to the Master*) : "Narendra is now beginning to understand you rather well."

Sri Ramakrishna laughs and says : "Yes, that is so. I see that many others, too, are beginning to understand. (*To M.*) Isn't that so?"

M : "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna turns his eyes to Narendra and M. and by a sign of his finger draws the attention of the devotees to them. He first points out Narendra and then M. Rakhal understands the Master's hint and says to him with a smile, "Don't you mean that Narendra has the attitude of a hero, and he [meaning M.] that of a handmaid of God?"

Sri Ramakrishna laughs.

NARENDRA (*smiling, to Rakhal*): "He [meaning M.] doesn't talk much and is bashful. Is that why you say he is a handmaid of God?"

MASTER (*smiling, to Narendra*): "Well, what do you think of me?"

NARENDRA: "You are a hero, a handmaid of God, and everything else."

These words fill Sri Ramakrishna with divine emotion. He places his hand on his heart and is about to say something.

He says to Narendra and the other devotees:

"I see that all things—everything that exists—have come from this."

He asks Narendra by a sign, "What did you understand?"

NARENDRA: "All created objects have come from you."

The Master's face beams with joy. He says to Rakhal, "Did you hear what he said?"

Sri Ramakrishna asks Narendra to sing. Narendra intones a hymn. His mind is full of renunciation. He sings:

Unsteady is water on the lotus petal;
Just as unsteady is the life of man.
One moment with a sadhu is the boat
That takes one across the ocean of this world. . . .

Narendra has hardly finished one or two lines, when Sri Ramakrishna says to him by a sign: "What are you singing? That is a very insignificant attitude, a very commonplace thing."

Now Narendra sings about the love of Krishna, impersonating one of His handmaids:

How strange, O friend, are the rules of life and death!
The Youth of Braja has fled away,
And this poor maid of Braja soon will die.
Mādhava is in love with other maids
More beautiful than I.
Alas! He has forgotten the milkman's artless daughter.

Who would ever have guessed, dear friend, that He,
A Lover so tender, so divine,
Could be a beggar simply for outward charm?
I was a fool not to have seen it before;
But carried away by His beauty,
I yearned alone to hold His two feet to my breast.

Now I shall drown myself in the Jamuna's stream,
Or take a draught of poison, friend!
Or I shall bind a creeper round my neck,
Or hang myself from a young tamala tree;
Or, failing all of these,
Destroy my wretched self by chanting Krishna's name.



Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees are greatly moved by the song. The Master and Rakhal shed tears of love. Narendra is intoxicated with the love of the gopis of Braja for their Sweetheart, Sri Krishna, and sings :

O Krishna ! Beloved ! You are mine.
What shall I say to You, O Lord ?
What shall I ever say to You ?
Only a woman am I,
And never fortune's favourite ;
I do not know what to say.

You are the mirror for the hand,
And You are the flower for the hair.
O Friend, I shall make a flower of You
And wear You in my hair ;
Under my braids I shall hide You, Friend !
No one will see You there.

You are the betel-leaf for the lips,
The sweet collyrium for the eyes ;
O Friend, with You I shall stain my lips,
With You I shall paint my eyes.

You are the sandal-paste for the body ;
You are the necklace for the neck.
I shall anoint myself with You,
My fragrant Sandal-paste,
And soothe my body and my soul.
I shall wear You, my lovely Necklace,
Here about my neck,
And You will lie upon my bosom,
Close to my throbbing heart.

You are the Treasure in my body ;
You are the Dweller in my house.
You are to me, O Lord,
What wings are to the flying bird,
What water is to the fish.



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THE MASTER AND BUDDHA

Friday, April 9, 1886

IT WAS FIVE O'CLOCK in the afternoon. Narendra, Kali, Niranjan, and M. were talking downstairs in the Cossipore garden house.

NIRANJAN (*to M.*): "Is it true that Vidyasagar is going to open a new school? Why don't you try to secure employment there for Naren?"

NARENDRA: "I have had enough of service under Vidyasagar."

Narendra had just returned from a visit to Bodh-Gaya, where he had gone with Kali and Tarak. In that sacred place he had been absorbed in deep meditation before the image of Buddha. He had paid his respects to the Bodhi-tree, which is an offshoot of the original tree under which Buddha attained Nirvana.

Kali said, "One day at Gaya, at Umesh Babu's house, Narendra sang many classical songs to the accompaniment of the mridanga."

Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed in the big hall upstairs. It was evening. M. was alone in the room, fanning the Master. Latu came in a little later.

MASTER (*to M.*): "Please bring a chaddar for me and a pair of slippers."

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER (*to Latu*): "The chaddar will cost ten annas, and then the slippers—what will be the total cost?"

LATU: "One rupee and ten annas."

Sri Ramakrishna asked M., by a sign, to note the price.

Narendra entered the room and took a seat. Sashi, Rakhal, and one or two other devotees came in. The Master asked Narendra to stroke his feet. He also asked him whether he had taken his meal.

MASTER (*smiling, to M.*): "He went there [referring to Bodh-Gaya]."

M. (*to Narendra*): "What are the doctrines of Buddha?"

NARENDRA: "He could not express in words what he had realized by his tapasya. So people say he was an atheist."

MASTER (*by signs*): "Why atheist? He was not an atheist. He simply could not express his inner experiences in words. Do you know what 'Buddha' means? It is to become one with Bodha, Pure Intelligence, by meditating on

That which is of the nature of Pure Intelligence ; it is to become Pure Intelligence Itself."

NARENDRA : " Yes, sir. There are three classes of Buddhas : Buddha, Arhat, and Bodhisattva."

MASTER : " This too is a sport of God Himself, a new lila of God."

" Why should Buddha be called an atheist ? When one realizes Svarupa, the true nature of one's Self, one attains a state that is something between *asti*, *is*, and *nasti*, *is-not*."

NARENDRA (to M.) : " It is a state in which contradictions meet. A combination of hydrogen and oxygen produces cool water ; and the same hydrogen and oxygen are used in the oxy-hydrogen blowpipe."

" In that state both activity and non-activity are possible ; that is to say, one then performs unselfish action."

" Worldly people, who are engrossed in sense-objects, say that everything exists—*asti*. But the mayavadis, the illusionists, say that nothing exists—*nasti*. The experience of a Buddha is beyond both 'existence' and 'non-existence'."

MASTER : " This 'existence' and 'non-existence' are attributes of Prakriti. The Reality is beyond both."

The devotees remained silent a few moments.

MASTER (to Narendra) : " What did Buddha preach ?"

NARENDRA : " He did not discuss the existence or non-existence of God. But he showed compassion for others all his life."

" A hawk pounced upon a bird and was about to devour it. In order to save the bird, Buddha gave the hawk his own flesh."

Sri Ramakrishna remained silent. Narendra became more and more enthusiastic about Buddha.

NARENDRA : " How great his renunciation was ! Born a prince, he renounced everything ! If a man has nothing, no wealth at all, what does his renunciation amount to ? After attaining Buddhahood and experiencing Nirvana, Buddha once visited his home and exhorted his wife, his son, and many others of the royal household to embrace the life of renunciation. How intense his renunciation was ! But look at Vyasa's conduct ! He forbade his son Sukadeva to give up the world, saying, ' My son, practise religion as a householder.'"

Sri Ramakrishna was silent. As yet he had not uttered a word.

NARENDRA : " Buddha did not care for Sakti or any such thing. He sought only Nirvana. Ah, how intense his dispassion was ! When he sat down under the Bodhi-tree to meditate, he took this vow : ' Let my body wither away here if I do not attain Nirvana.' Such a firm resolve."

" This body, indeed, is the great enemy. Can anything be achieved without chastising it ?"

SASHI : " But it is you who say that one develops sattva by eating meat. You insist that one should eat meat."

NARENDRA : " I eat meat, no doubt, but I can also live on rice, mere rice, even without salt."



After a few minutes Sri Ramakrishna broke his silence. He asked Narendra, by a sign, whether he had seen a tuft of hair on Buddha's head.

NARENDRA : "No, sir. He seems to have a sort of crown ; his head seems to be covered by strings of rudraksha beads placed on top of one another."

MASTER : "And his eyes ?"

NARENDRA : "They show that he is in samadhi."

Sri Ramakrishna again became silent. Narendra and the other devotees looked at him intently. Suddenly a smile lighted his face and he began to talk with Narendra. M. was fanning him.

MASTER (to Narendra) : "Well, here you find everything—even ordinary red lentils and tamarind. Isn't that so ?"

NARENDRA : "After experiencing all those states, you are now dwelling on a lower plane."

M. (to himself) : "Yes, after realizing all those ideals, he is now living as a bhakta, a devotee of God."

MASTER : "Someone seems to be holding me to a lower plane."

Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna took the fan from M.'s hand and said : "As I see this fan, *directly* before me, in exactly the same manner have I seen God. And I have seen—"

With these words he placed his hand on his heart and asked Narendra, by a sign, "Can you tell me what I said ?"

NARENDRA : "I have understood."

MASTER : "Tell me."

NARENDRA : "I didn't hear you well."

Sri Ramakrishna said again, by a sign, "I have seen that He and the one who dwells in my heart are one and the same Person."

NARENDRA : "Yes, yes ! *Soham*—I am He."

MASTER : "But only a line divides the two—that I may enjoy divine bliss."

NARENDRA (to M.) : "Great souls, even after their own liberation, retain the ego and experience the pleasure and pain of the body that they may help others to attain liberation."

"It is like coolie work. We perform coolie work under compulsion, but great souls do so of their own sweet pleasure."

Again all fell into silence. After a time Sri Ramakrishna resumed the conversation.

MASTER (to Narendra and the others) : "The roof is clearly visible ; but it is extremely hard to reach it."

NARENDRA : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "But if someone who has already reached it drops down a rope, he can pull another person up."

"Once a sadhu from Hrishikesh came to Dakshineswar. He said to me : 'How amazing ! I find five kinds of samadhi manifested in you.'

"Just as a monkey climbs a tree, jumping from one branch to another, so also does the Mahavayu, the Great Energy, rise in the body, jumping from

one centre to another, and one goes into samadhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a monkey.

"Just as a fish darts about in the water and roams in great happiness, so also does the Mahavayu move upward in the body, and one goes into samadhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a fish.

"Like a bird hopping from one branch to another, the Mahavayu goes up in the tree of the body, now to this branch and now to that. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a bird.

"Like the slow creeping of an ant, the Mahavayu rises from centre to centre. When it reaches the Sahasrara one goes into samadhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of an ant.

"Like the wriggling of a snake, the Mahavayu rises in a zigzag way along the spinal column till it reaches the Sahasrara, and one goes into samadhi. One feels the rising of the Great Energy, as though it were the movement of a snake."

RAKHAL (*to the other devotees*): "Let us stop here. He has already talked a great deal. It will aggravate his illness."

Monday, April 12, 1886

About five o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the bed in his room in the Cossipore garden house. Sashi and M. were with him. He asked M., by a sign, to fan him. There was a fair in the neighbourhood in celebration of the last day of the Bengali year. A devotee, whom Sri Ramakrishna had sent to the fair to buy a few articles, returned.

"What have you bought?" the Master asked him.

DEVOTEE: "Candy for five pice, a spoon for two pice, and a vegetable-knife for two pice."

MASTER: "What about the penknife?"

DEVOTEE: "I couldn't get one for two pice."

MASTER (*eagerly*): "Go quickly and get one!"

M. was pacing the garden. Narendra and Tarak returned from Calcutta. They had visited Girish Ghosh's house and other places.

TARAK: "We have eaten a great deal of meat and other heavy stuff today."

NARENDRA: "Yes, our minds have come down a great deal. Let us practise tapasya. (*To M.*) What slavery to body and mind! We are just like coolies—as if this body and mind were not ours but belonged to someone else."

In the evening lamps were lighted in the house. Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed, facing the north. He was absorbed in contemplation of the Mother of the Universê. A few minutes later Fakir, who belonged to the priestly family of Balaram, recited the Hymn of Forgiveness addressed to the Divine Mother. Sashi, M., and two or three other devotees were in the room. After the recital Sri Ramakrishna, with folded hands, very respectfully bowed to the Deity.

M. was fanning Sri Ramakrishna. The Master said to him by signs, "Get a stone cup for me that will hold a quarter of a seer of milk—white stone." He drew the shape of the cup with his finger.

M : "Yes, sir."

MASTER : "When eating from other cups I get the smell of fish."

Tuesday, April 13, 1886

It was about eight o'clock in the morning. M. had spent the night at the garden house. After taking his bath in the Ganges he prostrated himself before Sri Ramakrishna. Ram had just come. He saluted the Master and took a seat. He had brought a garland of flowers, which he offered to the Master. Most of the devotees were downstairs ; only one or two were in the Master's room.

Sri Ramakrishna was talking to Ram.

MASTER : "How do you find me ?"

RAM : "In you one finds everything."

"Presently there will be a discussion about your illness."

The Master smiled and asked Ram by a sign, "Will there really be a discussion about my illness ?"

Sri Ramakrishna's slippers were not comfortable. Dr. Rajendra Dutta intended to buy a new pair¹ and had asked for the measurement of his feet. The measurement was taken.

Sri Ramakrishna asked M., by a sign, about the stone cup. M. at once stood up. He wanted to go to Calcutta for the cup.

MASTER : "Don't bother about it now."

M : "Sir, these devotees are going to Calcutta. I will go with them."

M. bought the cup in Calcutta and returned to Cossipore at noon. He saluted the Master and placed the cup near him. Sri Ramakrishna took the cup in his hands and looked at it. Dr. Rajendra Dutta, Dr. Sreenath, Rakhal, Haldar, and several others came in. Rakhal, Sashi, and the younger Naren were in the room. The physicians heard the report of the Master's illness. Dr. Sreenath had a copy of the *Gita* in his hand.

DR. SREENATH (*to his friends*) : "Everything is under the control of Prakriti. Nobody can escape the fruit of past action. This is called prarabdha."

MASTER : "Why, if one chants the name of God, meditates on Him, and takes refuge in Him—"

DR. SREENATH : "But, sir, how can one escape prarabdha, the effect of action performed in previous births ?"

MASTER : "No doubt a man experiences a little of the effect ; but much of it is cancelled by the power of God's name. A man was born blind of an eye. This was his punishment for a certain misdeed he had committed in his past birth, and the punishment was to remain with him for six more births. He, however, took a bath in the Ganges, which gives one liberation. This meritorious action could not cure his blindness, but it saved him from his future births."

DR. SREENATH : "But, sir, the scriptures say that nobody can escape the fruit of karma."

¹ These slippers given by Dr. Rajendra are now worshipped at Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Dr. Sreenath was ready to argue with the Master.

MASTER (to M.): "Why don't you tell him that there is a great difference between the Isvarakoti and an ordinary man? An Isvarakoti cannot commit sin. Why don't you tell him that?"

M. remained silent and then said to Rakhal, "You tell him."

After a few minutes the physicians left the room. Sri Ramakrishna was talking to Rakhal Haldar.

HALDAR: "Dr. Sreenath studies Vedanta. He is a student of the *Yogavasishtha*."

MASTER: "A householder should not hold the view that everything is illusory, like a dream."

Referring to a man named Kalidas, a devotee said, "He too discusses Vedanta, but he has lost all his money in lawsuits."

MASTER (smiling): "Yes, one proclaims everything to be maya, and still one goes to court! (To Rakhal) Mukherji of Janai, too, talked big. But at last he came to his senses. If I were well I should have talked a little more with Dr. Sreenath. Can one obtain jnana just by talking about it?"

HALDAR: "You are right, sir. I have seen enough of jnana. Now all I need in order to live in the world is a little bhakti. The other day I came to you with a problem on my mind, and you solved it."

MASTER (eagerly): "What was it?"

HALDAR: "Sir, when that boy (pointing to the younger Naren) came in, you said he had controlled his passions."

MASTER: "Yes, it is true. He is totally unaffected by worldliness. He says he doesn't know what lust is. (To M.) Just feel my body. All the hair is standing on end."

The Master's hair actually stood on end at the thought of a pure mind totally devoid of lust. He always said that God manifests Himself where there is no lust.

Rakhal Haldar took his leave.

Sri Ramakrishna was seated with the devotees. A crazy woman had been troubling everybody in order to see the Master. She had assumed toward him the attitude of a lover and often ran into the garden house and burst into the Master's room. She had even been beaten by the devotees; but that did not stop her.

SASHI: "If she comes again I shall shove her out of the place!"

MASTER (tenderly): "No, no! Let her come and go away."

RAKHAL: "At the beginning I too used to feel jealous of others when they visited the Master. But he graciously revealed to me that my guru is also the Guru of the Universe. Has he taken this birth only for a few of us?"

SASHI: "I don't mean that. But why should she trouble him when he is ill? And she is such a nuisance!"

RAKHAL: "We all give him trouble. Did we all come to him after attaining perfection? Haven't we caused him suffering? How Narendra and some of the others behaved in the beginning! How they argued with him!"

SASHI : " Whatever Narendra expressed in words he carried out in his actions."

RAKHAL : " How rude Dr. Sarkar has been to him ! No one is guiltless, if it comes to that."

MASTER (to Rakhal, tenderly) : " Will you eat something ?"

RAKHAL : " Not now. Later on."

Sri Ramakrishna asked M., by a sign, whether he was going to have his meal there.

RAKHAL (to M.) : " Please take your meal here. He is asking you too."

Sri Ramakrishna was seated completely naked. He looked like a five-year-old boy. Just then the crazy woman climbed the stairs and stood near the door.

M. (in a low voice, to Sashi) : " Ask her to salute him and go away. Don't make any fuss."

Sashi took her downstairs.

It was the first day of the Bengali year. Many women devotees arrived. They saluted Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother. Among them were the wives of Balaram and Manomohan, and the brahmani of Baghbazar. Several of them had brought their children along.

Some of the women offered flowers at the Master's feet. Two young girls, nine or ten years of age, sang a few songs.

First they sang :

We moan for rest, alas ! but rest can never find ;
We know not whence we come, nor where we float away.
Time and again we tread this round of smiles and tears ;
In vain we pine to know whither our pathway leads,
And why we play this empty play. . . .

Then :

There comes Radha, and there see your Krishna,
With arching eyes and the flute at His lips. . . .

And finally :

O tongue, always repeat the name of Mother Durga !
Who but your Mother Durga will save you in distress ? . . .

Sri Ramakrishna said by a sign : " That's good ! They are singing of the Divine Mother."

The brahmani of Baghbazar had the nature of a child. Sri Ramakrishna told Rakhal, by a sign, to ask her to sing. The devotees smiled as the brahmani sang :

O Hari, I shall sport with You today ;
For I have found You alone in the nidhū wood. . . .

The women devotees went downstairs.

It was afternoon. M. and a few other devotees were seated near the Master. Narendra came in. He looked, as the Master used to say, like an unsheathed sword.

Narendra sat down near the Master and within his hearing expressed his utter annoyance with women. He told the devotees what an obstacle women were in the path of God-realization.

Sri Ramakrishna made no response. He listened to Narendra.

Narendra said again : " I want peace. I do not care even for God."

Sri Ramakrishna looked at him intently without uttering a word. Now and then Narendra chanted, " Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, the Infinite."

It was eight o'clock in the evening. Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed. A few devotees sat on the floor in front of him. Surendra arrived from his office. He carried in his hands four oranges and two garlands of flowers. Now he looked at the Master and now at the devotees. He unburdened his heart to Sri Ramakrishna.

SURENDRA (*looking at M. and the others*) : " I have come after finishing my office work. I thought, 'What is the good of standing on two boats at the same time ?' So I finished my duties first and then came here. Today is the first day of the year ; it is also Tuesday, an auspicious day to worship the Divine Mother. But I didn't go to Kalighat. I said to myself, 'It will be enough if I see him who is Kali Herself, and who has rightly understood Kali.'"

Sri Ramakrishna smiled.

SURENDRA : " It is said that a man should bring fruit and flowers when visiting his guru or a holy man. So I have brought these. . . . (*To the Master*) I am spending all this money for you. God alone knows my heart. Some people feel grieved to give away a penny ; and there are people who spend a thousand rupees without feeling any hesitation. God sees the inner love of a devotee and accepts his offering."

Sri Ramakrishna said to Surendra, by a nod, that he was right.

SURENDRA : " I couldn't come here yesterday. It was the last day of the year. But I decorated your picture with flowers."

Sri Ramakrishna said to M., by a sign, " Ah, what devotion !"

SURENDRA : " As I was coming here I bought these two garlands for four annas."

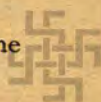
Almost all the devotees took their leave. The Master asked M. to stroke his legs and fan him.

Friday, April 16, 1886

The moon was shining brilliantly, flooding the garden paths, the trees, and the water of the lake with its white rays. Girish, M., Latu, and a few other devotees were seated on the steps leading to the lake. The house stood to the west of the lake. A lamp burnt in the Master's room on the second floor. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on his bed. There were several devotees in the room.

A few minutes later Girish and M. were strolling along a garden path lined with flowering plants and fruit-trees.

M : " How beautiful this moonlight is ! Perhaps nature has had the same laws from time out of mind."



GIRISH : " How do you know that ? "

M : " There is no change in the uniformity of nature. European scientists have been discovering new stars through the telescope. There are mountains on the moon ; they have seen them."

GIRISH : " It is difficult to be sure of that. It is hard for me to believe it."

M : " Why ? The mountains have been observed through the telescope."

GIRISH : " How can you be sure that they have been rightly observed ? Suppose there are other things between the moon and the earth. Light passing through them may conjure up such visions."

Narendra, Rakhal, Niranjan, Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Kali, Jogin, Latu, and a few other young devotees had been living at the Cossipore garden house in order to nurse Sri Ramakrishna. That evening Narendra, Kali, and Tarak had gone to Dakshineswar. They were going to spend the night in the Panchavati, meditating on God.

Girish, Latu, and M. went to Sri Ramakrishna's room and found him sitting on the bed. Sashi and one or two devotees had been tending the Master. Baburam, Niranjan, and Rakhal also entered the room. It was a large room. Some medicines and a few other accessories were kept near the bed. One entered the room by a door at the north end.

Since Sri Ramakrishna had to be tended all night, the devotees stayed awake by turns. The devotee who tended him fixed Sri Ramakrishna's mosquito net and then either lay on a mat on the floor or spent the night sitting up. Since Sri Ramakrishna got very little sleep on account of his illness, his attendant, too, slept very little.

That evening Sri Ramakrishna was somewhat better. The devotees saluted the Master and sat down on the floor. The Master asked M. to bring the lamp near him. He greeted Girish cordially.

MASTER (*to Girish*) : " Are you quite well ? (*To Latu*) Prepare a smoke for him and give him a betel-leaf."

A few minutes afterwards he asked Latu to give Girish some refreshments. Latu said that they had been sent for.

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting up. A devotee offered him some garlands of flowers. Sri Ramakrishna put them around his neck one by one. Was he thus worshipping God who dwelt in his heart ? The devotees looked at him wonderingly. He took two garlands from his neck and gave them to Girish.

Every now and then Sri Ramakrishna asked whether the refreshments had been brought.

M. was fanning the Master. On the bed was a sandal-wood fan, the offering of a devotee. The Master gave it to M., who continued to fan him with it. He also gave M. two garlands.

M. had lost a son aged seven or eight about a year and a half before. The child had seen the Master many a time. Latu was telling Sri Ramakrishna about M.

LATU : " M. wept bitterly last night at the sight of some books that had belonged to his dead child. His wife is almost mad with grief. She sometimes

treats her other children violently. She creates a scene at home because he spends the night here now and then."

Sri Ramakrishna seemed worried to hear of this.

GIRISH : "It is nothing to be wondered at. Even after receiving the instruction of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna fainted from grief at the death of his son Abhimanyu."

Girish was given the refreshments on a tray. Sri Ramakrishna took a grain and Girish accepted the rest as prasad. He sat in front of the Master and began to eat. He needed water to drink. There was an earthen jug in the southeast corner of the room. It was the month of April, and the day was hot. Sri Ramakrishna said, "There is some nice water here."

The Master was so ill that he had not enough strength even to stand up. And what did the disciples see to their utter amazement ? They saw him leave the bed, completely naked, and move toward the jug ! He himself was going to pour the water into a tumbler. The devotees were almost frozen with fear. The Master poured the water into a glass. He poured a drop or two into his hand to see whether it was cool. He found that it was not very cool ; but since nothing better could be found, he reluctantly gave it to Girish.

Girish was eating the sweets. The devotees were sitting about, and M. was fanning Sri Ramakrishna.

GIRISH (*to the Master*) : "Deben Babu has decided to renounce the world."

On account of his illness Sri Ramakrishna could hardly talk. Touching his lip with his finger, he asked Girish, by signs, "Who will feed his wife and children ?"

GIRISH : "I don't know."

The other devotees remained silent. Girish began talking again while he ate the refreshments.

GIRISH : "Sir, which is wiser—to renounce the world regretfully, or to call on God, leading a householder's life ?"

MASTER (*to M.*) : "Haven't you read the *Gita* ? One truly realizes God if one performs one's worldly duties in a detached spirit, if one lives in the world after realizing that everything is illusory.

"Those who regretfully renounce the world belong to an inferior class.

"Do you know what a householder jnani is like ? He is like a person living in a glass house. He can see both inside and outside."

Again there was silence in the room.

MASTER (*to M.*) : "The refreshments are hot and good."

M. (*to Girish*) : "Yes, they were bought from Fagu's shop. The place is famous."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Yes, famous."

GIRISH : "They are really nice.

(*To the Master*) "Sir, my mind is now on a very lofty plane. Why does it come down again ?"

MASTER : "That always happens when one leads a worldly life. Sometimes the householder's mind goes up ; sometimes it goes down. Sometimes he

feels a great deal of devotion ; sometimes he feels less. This happens because he lives in the midst of 'woman and gold'. Sometimes a householder contemplates God or chants His name, and sometimes he diverts his mind to 'woman and gold'. He is like an ordinary fly, which now sits on a sweetmeat and now on filth or rotting sores.

"But it is quite different with sannyasis. They are able to fix their minds on God alone, completely withdrawing them from 'woman and gold'. They can enjoy the Bliss of God alone. A man of true renunciation cannot enjoy anything but God. He leaves any place where people talk of worldly things ; he listens only to spiritual talk. A man of true renunciation never speaks about anything but God. The bees light only on flowers, in order to sip honey ; they do not enjoy anything else."

Girish went to the small terrace to rinse his hands.

MASTER (to M.): "A man needs the grace of God to fix his whole mind on Him. Well, Girish has eaten a great many sweets. Tell him not to eat anything else tonight."

Girish returned to the room and sat in front of the Master. He was chewing a betel-leaf.

MASTER (to Girish): "Rakhal has now understood what is good and what is bad, what is real and what is unreal. He lives with his family, no doubt, but he knows what it means. He has a wife. And a son has been born to him. But he has realized that all these are illusory and impermanent. Rakhal will never be attached to the world.

"He is like a mudfish. The fish lives in the mud, but there is not the slightest trace of mud on its body."

GIRISH: "Sir, I don't understand all this. You can make everyone pure and unattached if you want to. You can make everyone good, whether he is a worldly man or a sannyasi. The Malaya breeze, I believe, turns all trees into sandal-wood."

MASTER: "Not unless there is substance in them. There are a few trees, the cotton-tree for instance, which are not turned into sandal-wood."

GIRISH: "I don't care."

MASTER: "But this is the law."

GIRISH: "But everything about you is illegal."

The devotees were listening to this conversation in great amazement. Every now and then the fan in M.'s hand stopped moving.

MASTER: "Yes, that may be true. When the river of bhakti overflows, the land all around is flooded with water to the depth of a pole.

"When a man is inebriated with divine love, he doesn't abide by the injunctions of the Vedas. He picks durva grass for the worship of the Deity, but he doesn't clean it. He picks whatever he lays his hands on. While gathering tulsi-leaves he even breaks the branches. Ah ! what a state of mind I passed through !

(To M.) "When one develops love of God, one needs nothing else."

M: "Yes, sir."

MASTER : " But a devotee must assume toward God a particular attitude. God in His Incarnation as Rama demonstrated *santa*, *dasya*, *vatsalya*, and *sakhya*. But Krishna demonstrated *madhur*, besides all these.

" Radha cherished the attitude of *madhur* toward Krishna. Her love was romantic. But in the case of Sita it was the pure love of a chaste wife for her husband. There was no romance in her love.

" But all this is the *lila* of God. He demonstrates different ideals to suit different times."

A crazy woman used to accompany Vijay Goswami to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and sing for Sri Ramakrishna. Her songs were about Kali. She also used to sing the songs of the Brahmo Samaj. The devotees called her " Pagli " ² and tried to keep her away from the Master.

MASTER (to *Girish* and the others) : " Pagli cherishes the attitude of *madhur* toward me. One day she came to Dakshineswar. Suddenly she burst out crying. ' Why are you crying ? ' I asked her. And she said, ' Oh, my head is aching ! ' (*All laugh.*) Another day I was eating when she came to Dakshineswar. She suddenly said, ' Won't you be kind to me ? ' I had no idea of what was passing through her mind, and went on eating. Then she said, ' Why did you push me away mentally ? ' I asked her, ' What is your attitude ? ' She said, ' *Madhur*. ' ' Ah ! ' I said. ' But I look on all women as manifestations of the Divine Mother. All women are mothers to me. ' Thereupon she said, ' I don't know all that. ' Then I called Ramlal and said to him : ' Ramlal, listen to her ! What is she talking about—this " pushing away mentally " ? ' Even now she keeps up that attitude."

GIRISH : " Blessed indeed is Pagli ! Maybe she is crazy. Maybe she is beaten by the devotees. But she meditates on you twenty-four hours a day. No matter how she meditates on you, no harm can ever befall her.

" Sir, how can I express my own feelings about it ? Think what I was before, and what I have become now by meditating on you ! Formerly I was indolent ; now that indolence has turned into resignation to God. Formerly I was a sinner ; now I have become humble. What else can I say ? "

The devotees remained silent. Rakhai expressed his sympathy for Pagli. He said : " We all feel sorry for her. She causes so much annoyance, and for that she suffers, too."

NIRANJAN (to *Rakhai*) : " You feel that way for her because you have a wife at home. But we could kill her."

RAKHAJ (*sharply*) : " Such bragging ! How dare you utter such words before him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] ? "

MASTER (to *Girish*) : " ' Woman and gold ' alone is the world. Many people regard money as their very life-blood. But however you may show love for money, one day, perhaps, every bit of it will slip from your hand.

" In our part of the country the farmers make narrow ridges around their paddy-fields. You know what those ridges are. Some farmers make ridges with great care all the way around their fields. Such ridges are destroyed by the rush of the rain-water. But some farmers leave a part of the ridge open and

² The Bengali word for " crazy woman ".

put sod there. The water flows through the sod, leaving the field covered with silt after the rain. They reap a rich harvest.

"They alone make good use of their money who spend it for the worship of God or the service of holy men and devotees. Their money bears fruit.

"I cannot eat anything offered by physicians. I mean those who traffic in human suffering. Their money is blood and pus."

Sri Ramakrishna mentioned two physicians in this connection.

GIRISH : "Dr. Rajendra Dutta is a generous person. He doesn't accept a penny from anybody. He gives away money in charity."

Saturday, April 17, 1886

It was the night of the full moon. For some time Narendra had been going to Dakshineswar daily. He spent a great deal of time in the Panchavati in meditation and contemplation. This day he returned from Dakshineswar in the evening. Tarak and Kali were with him.

It was eight o'clock in the evening. Moonlight and the south wind added to the charm of the garden house. Many of the devotees were meditating in the room downstairs. Referring to them, Narendra said to M., "They are shedding their upadhis one by one."

A few minutes later M. came into Sri Ramakrishna's room and sat down on the floor. The Master asked him to wash his towel and the spittoon. M. washed them in the reservoir.

Next morning Sri Ramakrishna sent for M. After taking his bath in the Ganges and saluting the Master, he had gone to the roof. Sri Ramakrishna asked M. to bring his grief-stricken wife to the garden house, where she could have her meal.

The Master said to M., by a sign : "Ask her to come. Let her stay here a couple of days. She may bring the baby."

M : "Yes, sir. It would be fine if she developed intense love of God."

Sri Ramakrishna again answered by signs : "Oh, grief pushes out devotion. And he was such a big boy !

"Krishnakishore had two sons. They were of the same age as Bhavanath, and each had two university degrees. They both died. And Krishnakishore, jnani that he was, could not at first control himself. How lucky I am that I have none !

"Arjuna was a great jnani ; and Krishna was his constant companion. Nevertheless he was completely overwhelmed with grief at the death of his son Abhimanyu.

"Why doesn't Kishori come ?"

A DEVOTEE : "He comes to the Ganges every day for his bath."

MASTER : "But why doesn't he come here ?"

DEVOTEE : "I shall ask him to come, sir."

MASTER : "Why doesn't Harish come ?"

Two young girls aged nine and ten, who belonged to M.'s family, sang several songs about the Divine Mother for the Master. They had sung for

him when he had visited M.'s house at Syampukur. The Master was very much pleased with their songs. After they had finished, they were sent for by the devotees to sing for them downstairs.

MASTER (to M.) : "Don't teach the girls any more songs. It is different if they sing spontaneously. But they will lose their modesty by singing before anyone and everyone. It is very necessary for women to be modest."

Flowers and sandal-paste were placed before the Master in a flower-basket. He sat on his bed and worshipped himself with these offerings. Sometimes he placed flowers and sandal-paste on his head, sometimes on his throat, sometimes on his heart, and sometimes on his navel.

Manomohan of Konnagar came in and took a seat after saluting the Master. Sri Ramakrishna was still busy with the worship of his inner Self. He put a garland of flowers on his own neck. After a while he seemed to be pleased with Manomohan and gave him some flowers. M., too, received a flower.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning. The Master and M. were talking. Sashi was also in the room.

MASTER (to M.) : "What were Narendra and Sashi talking about ? What did they discuss ?"

M. (to Sashi) : "What were you talking about ?"

SASHI : "Was it Niranjan that told you about it ?"

MASTER : "What were you discussing ? I heard 'God', 'Being', 'Non-being', and so forth."

SASHI (smiling) : "Shall I call Narendra ?"

MASTER : "Yes."

Narendra came in and took a seat.

MASTER (to M.) : "Ask him something. (To Narendra) Tell us what you were talking about."

NARENDRA : "I have indigestion. What's there to tell you about ?"

MASTER : "You will get over your indigestion."

M. (smiling) : "Tell us about the experience of Buddha."

NARENDRA : "Have I become a Buddha, that you want me to talk about him ?"

M : "What does Buddha say about the existence of God ?"

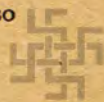
NARENDRA : "How can you say that God exists ? It is you who have created this universe. Don't you know what Berkeley says about it ?"

M : "Yes, I do. According to him, *esse is percipi*.³ The world exists as long as the sense-organs perceive it."

MASTER : "Nangta used to say, 'The world exists in mind alone and disappears in mind alone.' But as long as 'I-consciousness' exists, one should assume the servant-and-master relationship with God."

NARENDRA (to M.) : "How can you prove by reasoning that God exists ? But if you depend on faith, then you must accept the relationship of servant and Master. And if you accept that—and you can't help it—then you must also say that God is kind."

³ The existence of external objects depends on their perception.



"You think only of the suffering in the world—why do you forget that God has also given you so much happiness? How kind He is to us! He has granted us three very great things: human birth, the yearning to know God, and the companionship of a great soul."

All were silent.

MASTER (to Narendra): "I feel very clearly that there is Someone within me."

Dr. Rajendralal arrived and took a seat. He had been treating the Master with homeopathic medicine. When the talk about medicine was over, Sri Ramakrishna pointed out Manomohan to the doctor.

RAJENDRA: "He is a distant relative of mine."

Narendra went downstairs. He was singing to himself:

Lord, Thou hast lifted all my sorrow with the vision of Thy face,
And the magic of Thy beauty has bewitched my mind;
Beholding Thee, the seven worlds forget their never-ending woe;
What shall I say, then, of myself, a poor and lowly soul? . . .

Narendra had a little indigestion. He said to M.: "If one follows the path of bhakti, then the mind comes down a little to the body. Otherwise, who am I? Neither man nor God. I have neither pleasure nor pain."

It was about nine o'clock in the evening. Surendra and a few other devotees entered Sri Ramakrishna's room and offered him garlands of flowers. Baburam, Latu, and M. were also in the room.

Sri Ramakrishna put Surendra's garland on his own neck. All sat quietly. Suddenly the Master made a sign to Surendra to come near him. When the disciple came near the bed, Sri Ramakrishna took the garland from his neck and put it around Surendra's. Surendra saluted the Master. Sri Ramakrishna asked him, by a sign, to rub his feet. Surendra gave them a gentle massage.

Several devotees were sitting on the bank of the reservoir in the garden, singing to the accompaniment of drum and cymbals. Sri Ramakrishna sent them word through Latu to sing the name of Hari.

M., Baburam, and several others were still sitting in the Master's room. They heard the devotees singing:

There dances my Gora, chanting Hari's name! . . .

When the Master heard the song he made a sign to Baburam and M. to join them. He also asked them to dance.

A few minutes later Sri Ramakrishna sent another devotee to the singers to ask them to sing the following improvised lines: "Ah, my Gora even knows how to dance!" "How can I describe my Gora's moods?" "My Gora dances with both his hands upraised."

The music was over. Surendra was almost in an ecstatic mood. He sang:

Crazy is my Father,⁴ crazy is my Mother,
And I, their son, am crazy too!

⁴ Siva.

Syama is my Mother's name.
My Father strikes His cheeks and makes a hollow sound :
Ba-ba-bom ! Ba-ba-bom !
And my Mother, drunk and reeling,
Falls across my Father's body !
Syama's streaming tresses hang in vast disorder ;
Bees are swarming numberless
About Her crimson Lotus Feet.
Listen, as She dances, how Her anklets ring !



LI

THE MASTER'S LOVE FOR HIS DEVOTEES

Wednesday, April 21, 1886

M. AND NARENDRA were strolling in the garden of the house at Cossipore. Narendra was very much worried because he had not yet been able to solve the financial difficulties of his family.

NARENDRA : " I don't care for the job at the Vidyasagar School. I have been thinking of going to Gaya. I have been told that a zemindar there needs the services of a manager for his estate. There is no such thing as God."

M. (*smiling*) : " You may say that now, but later on you will talk differently. Scepticism is a stage in the path of God-realization. One must pass through stages like this and go much farther ; only thus can one realize God. That is what the Master says."

NARENDRA : " Has anybody seen God as I see that tree ? "

M : " Yes, our Master has seen God that way."

NARENDRA : " It may be his hallucination."

M : " Whatever a person experiences in a particular state is real for him in that state. Suppose you are dreaming that you have gone to a garden. As long as the dream lasts, the garden is real for you. But you think of it as unreal when your mind undergoes a change, as, for instance, when you awake. When your mind attains the state in which one sees God, you will know God to be real."

NARENDRA : " I want truth. The other day I had a great argument with Sri Ramakrishna himself."

M. (*smiling*) : " What happened ? "

NARENDRA : " He said to me, ' Some people call me God.' I replied, ' Let a thousand people call you God, but I shall certainly not call you God as long as I do not know it to be true.' He said, ' Whatever many people say is indeed truth ; that is dharma.' Thereupon I replied, ' Let others proclaim a thing as truth, but I shall certainly not listen to them unless I myself realize it as truth.' "

M. (*smiling*) : " Your attitude is like that of Western savants—Copernicus and Berkeley, for instance. The whole world said it was the sun that moved, but Copernicus did not listen. Everybody said the external world was real,

but Berkeley paid no heed. Therefore Lewis says, 'Why was Berkeley not a philosophical Copernicus?'

NARENDRA : "Can you give me a History of Philosophy?"

M : "By whom? Lewis?"

NARENDRA : "No, Uberweg. I must read a German author."

M : "You just said, 'Has anybody seen God as I see that tree?' Suppose God comes to you as a man and says, 'I am God.' Will you believe it then? You certainly remember the story of Lazarus. After his death, Lazarus said to Abraham, 'Let me go back to the earth and tell my friends and relatives that hell and the after-life exist.' Abraham replied : 'Do you think they will believe you? They will say it is a charlatan who is telling them such things.' The Master says that God cannot be known by reasoning. By faith alone one attains everything—knowledge and super-knowledge. By faith alone one sees God and becomes intimate with Him."

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna was in bed. Ramlal, who had come from Dakshineswar, was massaging his feet. Gopal of Sinthi and M. were in the room.

Sri Ramakrishna asked M. to shut the windows and massage his feet. At the Master's request Purna had come to the Cossipore garden in a hired carriage. M. was to pay the carriage hire. Sri Ramakrishna made a sign to Gopal, asking whether he had obtained the money from M. Gopal answered in the affirmative.

At nine o'clock in the evening Surendra, Ram, and the others were about to return to Calcutta. It was the sultry month of April and Sri Ramakrishna's room became very hot during the day; so Surendra had brought some straw screens to keep the room cool.

SURENDRA : "Why, nobody has hung up these straw screens. Nobody here pays attention to anything."

A DEVOTEE (*smiling*) : "The devotees here are now in the state of Brahmajñana. They feel, 'I am He.' The world is unreal to them. When they come down to a lower plane and regard God as the Master and themselves as His servants, they will pay attention to the service of Sri Ramakrishna." (*All laugh.*)

Thursday, April 22, 1886

In the evening Rakhal, Sashi, and M. were strolling in the garden at Cossipore.

M : "The Master is like a child—beyond the three gunas."

SASHI AND RAKHAL : "He himself has said that."

RAKHAL : "He sits in a tower, as it were, from which he gets all information and sees everything; but others cannot go there and reach him."

M : "He said, 'In such a state of mind one sees God constantly.' In him there is not the slightest trace of worldliness. His mind is like dry fuel, which catches fire quickly."

SASHI : "He described the different kinds of intelligence to Charu. The right intelligence is that through which one attains God; but the intelligence

that enables one to become a deputy magistrate or a lawyer, or to acquire a house, is a mean intelligence. It is like thin and watery curd, which merely soaks flattened rice but does not add any flavour to it. It is not like thick, superior curd. But the intelligence through which one attains God is like thick curd."

M : " Ah, what wonderful words ! "

SASHI : " Kali¹ said to the Master : ' What's the good of having joy ? The Bhils are joyous. Savages are always singing and dancing in a frenzy of delight. ' "

RAKHAL : " He [meaning the Master] replied to Kali : ' What do you mean ? Can the Bliss of Brahman be the same as worldly pleasure ? Ordinary men are satisfied with worldly pleasure. One cannot enjoy the Bliss of Brahman unless one completely rids oneself of attachment to worldly things. There is the joy of money and sense experience, and there is the Bliss of God-realization. Can the two ever be the same ? The rishis enjoyed the Bliss of Brahman. ' "

M : " You see, Kali nowadays meditates on Buddha ; that is why he speaks of a state beyond Bliss. "

RAKHAL : " Yes, Kali told the Master about Buddha. Sri Ramakrishna said to him : ' Buddha is an Incarnation of God. How can you compare him to anybody else ? As he is great, so too is his teaching great. ' Kali said to him : ' Everything, indeed, is the manifestation of God's Power. Both worldly pleasure and the Bliss of God are the manifestation of that Power. ' "

M : " What did the Master say to that ? "

RAKHAL : " He said : ' How can that be ? Is the power to beget a child the same as the power through which one realizes God ? ' "

Sri Ramakrishna was sitting in his room on the second floor. Narendra, Rakhal, Sashi, Surendra, M., Bhavanath, and other devotees were present. Dr. Mahendra Sarkar and Dr. Rajendra Dutta were also there to examine him. His condition was growing worse.

The house-rent was between sixty and sixty-five rupees. Surendra bore most of the expenses and had rented the house in his name. The other householder devotees contributed financial help according to their power. A cook and a maid had been engaged to look after the members of the household.

MASTER (to Dr. Sarkar and the others) : " The expenses are mounting. "

DR. SARKAR (pointing to the devotees) : " But they are ready to bear them. They do not hesitate to spend money. (To Sri Ramakrishna) Now, you see, gold is necessary. "

MASTER (to Narendra) : " Why don't you answer ? "

Narendra remained silent. Dr. Sarkar resumed the conversation.

DR. SARKAR : " Gold is necessary, and also woman. "

RAJENDRA : " Yes, his [meaning Sri Ramakrishna's] wife has been cooking his meals. "

¹ One of the disciples of the Master, later known as Swami Abhedananda

DR. SARKAR (*to the Master*) : " Do you see ? "

MASTER (*smiling*) : " Yes—but very troublesome ! "

DR. SARKAR : " If there were no troubles, then all would become paramahamsas."

MASTER : " If a woman touches me I fall ill. That part of my body aches as if stung by a horned fish."

DR. SARKAR : " I believe that. But how can you get along without woman ? "

MASTER : " My hand gets all twisted up if I hold money in it ; my breathing stops. But there is no harm in spending money to lead a spiritual life in the world—if one spends it, for instance, in the worship of God and the service of holy men and devotees.

" A man forgets God if he is entangled in the world of maya through a woman. It is the Mother of the Universe who has assumed the form of maya, the form of woman. One who knows this rightly does not feel like leading the life of maya in the world. But he who truly realizes that all women are manifestations of the Divine Mother may lead a spiritual life in the world. Without realizing God one cannot truly know what a woman is."

Sri Ramakrishna had felt a slight improvement as a result of the homeopathic treatment.

RAJENDRA (*to the Master*) : " After getting rid of this illness you must begin to practise medicine as a homeopath. Otherwise, what's the use of this human life ? " (*All laugh.*)

NARENDRA : " Nothing like leather ! " ² (*All laugh.*)

A few minutes later the physicians took their leave. Sri Ramakrishna and M. were engaged in conversation. The Master was telling M. how he felt about woman.

MASTER (*to M.*) : " They say I cannot get along without ' woman and gold '. They don't understand the state of my mind.

" If I touch a woman my hand becomes numb ; it aches. If in a friendly spirit I approach a woman and begin to talk to her, I feel as if a barrier had been placed between us. It is impossible for me to cross that barrier.

" If a woman enters my room when I am alone, at once I become like a child and regard her as my mother."

As M. listened to these words, he became speechless with wonder at Sri Ramakrishna's exalted state of mind. Bhavanath and Narendra were sitting at a distance, talking together. Bhavanath had married and was trying to find a job ; so he could not visit Sri Ramakrishna frequently at Cossipore. He had said to M. : " I understand that Vidyasagar wants to start a new school. I have to earn my livelihood. Will it be possible for me to secure a job in that school ? " The Master was much worried about Bhavanath's being entangled in worldly life. Bhavanath was twenty-three or twenty-four years old.

MASTER (*to Narendra*) : " Give him a lot of courage."

Narendra and Bhavanath smiled. Sri Ramakrishna said to Bhavanath, by signs : " Be a great hero. Don't forget yourself when you see her weeping

² To a cobbler nothing in this world is as important as leather.

behind her veil. Oh, women cry so much—even when they blow their noses !
(*Narendra, Bhavanath, and M. laugh.*)

"Keep your mind firm on God. He who is a hero lives with a woman but does not indulge in physical pleasures. Talk to your wife only about God."

A few minutes later Sri Ramakrishna said to Bhavanath, by a sign, "Take your meal here today."

BHAVANATH : "Yes, sir. I am quite all right. Don't worry about me."

Surendra came in and took a seat. The devotees offered garlands of flowers to the Master every evening. Sri Ramakrishna put these garlands around his neck. Surendra sat quietly in the room. Sri Ramakrishna was in a very happy mood and gave him two garlands. Surendra saluted the Master and put them around his neck.

All sat in silence and looked at Sri Ramakrishna. Surendra saluted the Master again and stood up. He was about to leave. He asked Bhavanath to hang the straw screens over the windows.

Hirananda came in with two of his friends. He was a native of Sindh, about twenty-two hundred miles from Calcutta. After finishing his college education in Calcutta in 1883, he had returned to Sindh and taken charge of editing two papers, the *Sindh Times* and the *Sind Sudhar*. While studying in Calcutta he had often visited Keshab Chandra Sen and had come to know him intimately. He had met Sri Ramakrishna at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and had spent an occasional night there with the Master. Hearing of Sri Ramakrishna's illness, he now came to Calcutta from Sindh to see him. The Master himself had been very eager to see Hirananda.

Sri Ramakrishna pointed to Hirananda and said to M., by signs : "A very fine boy. Do you know him ?"

M : "Yes, sir."

MASTER (to Hirananda and M.) : "Please talk a little. I want to hear you both."

When M. remained silent, Sri Ramakrishna asked him : "Is Narendra here ? Call him."

Narendra entered the room and sat near the Master.

MASTER (to Narendra and Hirananda) : "I want to hear you two talk."

Hirananda was silent a few moments and then after great hesitation began the conversation.

HIRANANDA (to Narendra) : "Why does a devotee of God suffer ?"

His words were sweet as nectar. Everyone in the room could feel that his heart was filled with love.

NARENDRA : "The plan of the universe is devilish. I could have created a better world."

HIRANANDA : "Can one feel happiness without misery ?"

NARENDRA : "I am not making a plan for a universe, but simply giving my opinion of the present plan."

"But all these problems are solved if we have faith only in one thing, and that is pantheism. All doubts disappear if one believes that everything is God. God alone is responsible for all that happens."

HIRANANDA : " Very easy to say that."

Narendra sang Sankara's Six Stanzas on Nirvana :

Om. I am neither mind, intelligence, ego, nor chitta,
Neither ears nor tongue nor the senses of smell and sight ;
Nor am I ether, earth, fire, water, or air :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

I am neither the prana nor the five vital breaths,
Neither the seven elements of the body nor its five sheaths,
Nor hands nor feet nor tongue, nor the organs of sex and voiding :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

Neither loathing nor liking have I, neither greed nor delusion ;
No sense have I of ego or pride, neither dharma nor moksha ;
Neither desire of the mind nor object for its desiring :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

Neither right nor wrongdoing am I, neither pleasure nor pain,
Nor the mantra, the sacred place, the Vedas, the sacrifice ;
Neither the act of eating, the eater, nor the food :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

Death or fear I have none, nor any distinction of caste ;
Neither father nor mother nor even a birth have I ;
Neither friend nor comrade, neither disciple nor guru :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

I have no form or fancy ; the All-pervading am I ;
Everywhere I exist, yet I am beyond the senses ;
Neither salvation am I, nor anything that may be known :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

HIRANANDA : " Good !"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA (to Hirananda, by a sign) : " Give him an answer."

HIRANANDA : " It is all the same, whether you look at a room from a corner or look at it from the middle. It is the same God-Consciousness that one feels, whether one says, ' O God, I am Thy servant ', or, ' I am He.' One may enter a room by several doors."

All sat in silence. Hirananda said to Narendra, " Please sing some more." Narendra sang the Five Stanzas on the Kaupina :³

Roaming ever in the grove of Vedanta,
Ever pleased with his beggar's morsel,
Ever walking with heart free from sorrow,
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

Sitting at the foot of a tree for shelter,
Using the palms of his hands for eating,
Wrapped in a garment fine or ugly,
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

Satisfied fully by the Bliss within him,
Curbing wholly the cravings of his senses,
Contemplating day and night the Absolute Brahman,
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

³ The loin-cloth of the sannyasi ; it is an emblem of renunciation.



As Sri Ramakrishna heard the line, "Contemplating day and night the Absolute Brahman", he said in a very low voice, "Ah !" Then, by a sign, he said to the devotees, "This is the characteristic of the yogi."

Narendra finished the hymn :

Witnessing the changes of mind and body,
Naught but the Self within him beholding,
Thinking not of outer, of inner, or of middle,
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth,

Chanting "Brahman", the Word of redemption,
Meditating only on "I am Brahman",
Living on alms and wandering freely,
Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth.

Again Narendra sang :

Meditate on Him, the Perfect, the Embodiment of Bliss ;
Meditate on Him, the Formless, the Root of the Universe,
The Hearer behind the ear, the Thinker behind the mind,
The Speaker behind the tongue, Himself beyond all words :
He is the Life of life, the Ultimate, the Adorable !

MASTER (to Narendra) : "And that one—'All that exists art Thou.'"
Narendra sang :

I have joined my heart to Thee : all that exists art Thou ;
Thee only have I found, for Thou art all that exists.
O Lord, Beloved of my heart ! Thou art the Home of all ;
Where indeed is the heart in which Thou dost not dwell ?
Thou hast entered every heart : all that exists art Thou.
Whether sage or fool, whether Hindu or Mussalman,
Thou makest them as Thou wilt : all that exists art Thou.

Thy presence is everywhere, whether in heaven or in Kaaba ;
Before Thee all must bow, for Thou art all that exists.
From earth below to the highest heaven, from heaven to deepest
earth,

I see Thee wherever I look : all that exists art Thou.
Pondering, I have understood ; I have seen it beyond a doubt ;
I find not a single thing that may be compared to Thee.
To Jafar it has been revealed that Thou art all that exists.

As the Master listened to the line, "Thou hast entered every heart", he said by a sign : "God dwells in everybody's heart. He is the Inner Guide."

As Narendra sang the line, "I see Thee wherever I look : all that exists art Thou", Hirananda said to him : "Yes, 'All that exists art Thou.' Now you say : 'Thou ! Thou ! Not I, but Thou !'"

NARENDRA : "Give me a one and I'll give you a million. Thou art I ; I am Thou. Nothing exists but I."

Narendra recited a few verses from the *Ashtavakra Samhita*. The room again became silent.

MASTER (to *Hirananda*, pointing to *Narendra*) : " He seems to be walking with an unsheathed sword in his hand. (To *M.*, pointing to *Hirananda*) How quiet ! Like a cobra, quiet before the charmer, with its hood spread."

Sri Ramakrishna fell into an inward mood. *Hirananda* and *M.* were seated near him. There was complete silence in the room. The Master's body was being racked with indescribable pain. The devotees could not bear the sight of this illness ; but somehow the Master made them forget his suffering. He sat there, his face beaming as if there were no trace of illness in his throat.

The devotees had placed flowers and garlands before him as their loving offerings. He picked up a flower and touched with it first his head, then his throat, heart, and navel. To the devotees he seemed a child playing with flowers.

Sri Ramakrishna used to tell the devotees that his divine visions and moods were accompanied by the rising of a spiritual current inside his body.

Now he talked to *M.*

MASTER : " I don't remember when the current went up. Now I am in the mood of a child. That is why I am playing with the flowers this way. Do you know what I see now ? I see my body as a frame made of bamboo strips and covered with a cloth. The frame moves. And it moves because someone dwells inside it.

" Again, I see the body to be like a pumpkin with the seeds scooped out. Inside this body there is no trace of passion or worldly attachment. It is all very clean inside, and—"

It became very painful for Sri Ramakrishna to talk further. He felt very weak. *M.* quickly guessed what the Master wanted to tell the devotees, and said, " And you are seeing God inside yourself."

MASTER : " Both inside and outside. The Indivisible Satchidananda—I see It both inside and outside. It has merely assumed this sheath [meaning his body] for a support and exists both inside and outside. I clearly perceive this."

M. and *Hirananda* listened intently to these words about his exalted state of God-Consciousness. A few moments later Sri Ramakrishna looked at them and resumed the conversation.

MASTER : " You all seem to me to be my kinsmen. I do not look on any of you as a stranger.

" I see you all as so many sheaths,⁴ and the heads are moving.

" I notice that when my mind is united with God the suffering of the body is left aside.

" Now I perceive only this : the Indivisible Satchidananda is covered with skin, and this sore in the throat is on one side of it."

The Master again fell silent. A few minutes later he said : " The attributes of matter are superimposed on Spirit, and the attributes of Spirit are superimposed on matter. Therefore when the body is ill a man says, ' I am ill.'"

Hirananda wanted to understand what the Master had just said ; so *M.* told him, " When hot water scalds the hand, people say that the water scalds ; but the truth is that it is the heat that scalds."

⁴ Referring to their bodies.

HIRANANDA (*to the Master*): "Please tell us why a devotee of God suffers."

MASTER: "It is the body that suffers."

Sri Ramakrishna seemed about to say something more. Hirananda and M. eagerly awaited his words.

Sri Ramakrishna said, "Do you understand?"

M. said to Hirananda, in a whisper: "The body suffers for the purpose of teaching men. His life is like a book of reference. In spite of so much physical suffering, his mind is one hundred per cent united with God."

HIRANANDA: "Yes, it is like Christ's crucifixion. But still the mystery remains—why should he, of all people, suffer like this?"

M: "The Master says it is the will of the Divine Mother. This is how She is sporting through his body."

The two devotees were talking in whispers. Sri Ramakrishna asked Hirananda, by a sign, what M. was talking about. Since Hirananda could not understand the sign, Sri Ramakrishna repeated it.

HIRANANDA: "He says that your illness is for the teaching of men."

MASTER: "But that's only his guess."

(*To M. and Hirananda*) "My mood is changing. I think that I should not say to everyone, 'May your spiritual consciousness be awakened.' People are so sinful in the Kaliyuga; if I awaken their spiritual consciousness I shall have to accept the burden of their sins."

M. (*to Hirananda*): "He will not awaken people's spiritual consciousness except at the right time. When a person is ready, he will awaken his spiritual consciousness."

Friday, April 23, 1886

It was Good Friday. Hirananda had taken his midday meal at the Cossipore garden house. About one o'clock in the afternoon he was stroking Sri Ramakrishna's feet. M. sat near by. Latu and one or two other devotees were going in and out of the room. It was the Master's earnest desire that Hirananda should stay for some time at the Cossipore garden house.

While massaging the Master's feet, Hirananda conversed with him. He spoke in a very sweet voice, as if trying to console a child.

HIRANANDA: "Why should you worry so much? You can enjoy peace of mind if you have faith in the physician. You are a child."

MASTER (*to M.*): "How can I have faith in the doctor? Dr. Sarkar said that I would not recover."

HIRANANDA: "But why should you worry so much about that? What is to happen must happen."

M. (*to Hirananda, aside*): "He is not worrying about himself. The preservation of his body is for the welfare of the devotees."

It was a sultry day and the room became very hot at noontime. The straw screens had been hung over the windows. Hirananda adjusted them. The Master looked at him.

MASTER (*to Hirananda*): "Please don't forget to send the pajamas."

Hirananda had told Sri Ramakrishna that he would feel more comfortable if he wore the pajamas used in Sindh. Sri Ramakrishna was reminding him of them.

Hirananda had not eaten well. The rice had not been well cooked. The Master felt very sorry about it and asked him again and again whether he would have some refreshments. On account of his illness he could hardly talk ; but still he repeated the question. He said to Latu, " Did you too eat that rice ? "

Sri Ramakrishna could hardly keep the cloth on his body. He was almost always naked, like a child. Hirananda had brought with him one or two of his Brahmo friends. Therefore every now and then the Master pulled the cloth to his waist.

MASTER (to Hirananda) : " Will you take me for an uncivilized person if I don't cover my body with my cloth ? "

HIRANANDA : " What difference does that make with you ? You are but a child."

MASTER (pointing to a Brahmo devotee) : " But he feels that way."

Hirananda was about to take his leave. In a very few days he was going to start for Sindh.

MASTER (to Hirananda) : " Suppose you don't go to Sindh."

HIRANANDA (smiling) : " But there is nobody there to do my work. I have my duties."

MASTER : " How much do you earn ? "

HIRANANDA (smiling) : " My work doesn't bring me a large salary."

MASTER : " Still, how much ? "

Hirananda laughed.

MASTER : " Why don't you live here ? "

Hirananda did not reply.

MASTER : " Suppose you give up the job."

Hirananda said nothing. He was ready to take his leave.

MASTER : " When will you see me again ? "

HIRANANDA : " I shall leave for Sindh on Monday, the day after tomorrow. I shall see you that morning."

Hirananda left.

M. was seated by the Master's side.

MASTER (to M.) : " He is a fine young man, isn't he ? "

M : " Yes, sir. He has a very sweet nature."

MASTER : " He said that Sindh is twenty-two hundred miles from Calcutta ; and he has come all that way to see me."

M : " True, sir. That would be impossible without real love."

MASTER : " He wants very much to take me to Sindh."

M : " The journey is very painful. It takes four or five days by train."

MASTER : " He has three university degrees."

M : " Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna was tired. He wanted to take a little rest. He asked M. to open the shutters of the windows and spread the straw mat over his bed. M. was fanning him. Sri Ramakrishna became drowsy.

After a short nap Sri Ramakrishna said to M., "Did I sleep?"

M: "A little."

Narendra, Sarat, and M. were talking downstairs.

NARENDRA: "How amazing it is! One learns hardly anything though one reads books for many years. How can a man realize God by practising sadhana for two or three days? Is it so easy to realize God? (*To Sarat*) You have obtained peace. M., too, has obtained it. But I have no peace."

It was afternoon. Many devotees were sitting in the Master's room. Narendra, Sarat, Sashi, Latu, Nityagopal, Girish, Ram, M., and Suresh were present.

Kedar came in. This was his first visit to the Master for some time. While staying in Dacca, in connection with his official duties, he had heard of Sri Ramakrishna's illness. On entering Sri Ramakrishna's room he took the dust of the Master's feet on his head and then joyously gave it to the others. The devotees accepted it with bowed heads. As he offered it to Sarat, the latter himself took the dust of Sri Ramakrishna's feet. M. smiled. The Master also smiled, looking at M. The devotees sat without uttering a word. Sri Ramakrishna seemed about to go into an ecstatic mood. Now and then he breathed heavily as if trying to suppress his emotion. He said to Kedar, by a sign, "Argue with Girish."

Girish said to Kedar: "Sir, I beg your pardon. At first I did not know who you were. That is why I argued with you. But now it is quite different."

Sri Ramakrishna smiled.

The Master drew Kedar's attention to Narendra and said: "He has renounced everything. (*To the devotees*) Kedar once said to Narendra, 'You may reason and argue now, but in the end you will roll on the ground, chanting Hari's name.' (*To Narendra*) Take the dust of Kedar's feet."

KEDAR (*to Narendra*): "Take the dust of his [meaning the Master's] feet. That will do."

Surendra was seated behind the other devotees. The Master looked at him with a smile and said to Kedar, "Ah, how sweet his nature is!" Kedar understood the Master's hint and went toward Surendra.

Surendra was very sensitive. Some of the devotees had been collecting funds from the householder devotees to meet the expenses of the Cossipore garden house. Surendra felt piqued at this. He was bearing most of the expenses himself.

SURENDRA (*to Kedar*): "How can I sit near all these holy people? A few days ago some of them [referring to Narendra] put on the ochre robe of the sannyasi and went on a pilgrimage to Buddha-Gaya. They wanted to see bigger sadhus there."

Sri Ramakrishna was trying to console Surendra. He said: "You are right. They are mere children. They don't know what is good."

SURENDRA (*to Kedar*): "Doesn't our gurudeva⁵ know our inner feelings? He does not care for money. It is our inner attitude that pleases him."

Sri Ramakrishna with a nod of his head approved Surendra's words.

⁵ Referring to Sri Ramakrishna.

The devotees had brought various food offerings for the Master and placed them in front of him. Sri Ramakrishna put a grain on his tongue and gave the plate to Surendra. He asked Surendra to distribute the prasada to the devotees. Surendra went downstairs with the offerings.

MASTER (to Kedar) : "You had better go downstairs and explain it all to Surendra. See that they don't get into any hot arguments."

M. was fanning Sri Ramakrishna. The Master said to him, "Won't you eat anything?" He sent M. downstairs.

It was about dusk. Girish and M. were strolling near the small reservoir in the garden.

GIRISH : "I understand that you are writing something about the Master.⁶ Is it true?"

M : "Who told you that?"

GIRISH : "I have heard about it. Will you give it to me?"

M : "No, I won't part with it unless I feel it is right to do so. I am writing it for myself, not for others."

GIRISH : "What do you mean?"

M : "You may get it when I die."

It was evening. A lamp was lighted in the Master's room. Amrita Basu, a Brahmo devotee, came in. Sri Ramakrishna had expressed his eagerness to see him. M. and a few other devotees were there. A garland of jasmine lay in front of the Master on a plantain-leaf. There was perfect silence in the room. A great yogi seemed to be silently communing with God. Every now and then the Master lifted the garland a little, as if he wanted to put it around his neck.

AMRITA (tenderly) : "Shall I put it around your neck?"

Sri Ramakrishna accepted the garland. He had a long conversation with Amrita. When the latter was about to take his leave, the Master said, "Come again."

AMRITA : "Yes, sir. I like to come very much. But I live at a great distance; so I cannot always come."

MASTER : "Do come, and take the carriage hire from here."

The devotees were amazed at the Master's tender love for Amrita.

The next day M. came to the garden house accompanied by his wife and a son. The boy was seven years old. It was at the Master's request that he brought his wife, who was almost mad with grief owing to the death of one of her sons.

That day the Master several times allowed M.'s wife the privilege of waiting on him. Her welfare seemed to occupy his attention a great deal. In the evening the Holy Mother came to the Master's room to feed him. M.'s wife

⁶ After Sri Ramakrishna's death M. published his notes of conversations with the Master in five volumes. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* is an English translation of these books from the original Bengali.

accompanied her with a lamp. The Master tenderly asked her many questions about her household. He requested her to come again to the garden house and spend a few days with the Holy Mother, not forgetting to ask her to bring her baby daughter. When the Master had finished his meal M.'s wife removed the plates. He chatted with her a few minutes.

About nine o'clock in the evening Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room with the devotees. He had a garland of flowers around his neck. He told M. that he had requested his wife to spend a few days at the garden house with the Holy Mother. His kindness touched M.'s heart.

M. was fanning him. The Master took the garland from his neck and said something to himself. Then in a very benign mood he gave the garland to M.





A group of devotees, standing by the Master's body after his passing away

- | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------|
| (1) Mahendra, or M. | (3) Kali | (5) Sarat | (6) Mani Mallick | (7) Gangadhar | (8) Navagopal | (11) Tarak |
| (13) The elder Gopal | (15) Vaikuntha | (17) Manomohan | (18) Harish | (19) Narayan | (21) Sashi | |
| (22) Latu | (23) Bhavanath | (24) Baburam | (25) Niranjana | (26) Narendra | (27) Ramachandra Dutta | |
| (28) Balaram Bose | (29) Rakhal | (30) Nityagopal | (31) Jogindra | (32) Devendra | | |



LII

AFTER THE PASSING AWAY

SRI RAMAKRISHNA passed away on Sunday, August 15, 1886, plunging his devotees and disciples into a sea of grief. They were like men in a shipwreck. But a strong bond of love held them together, and they found assurance and courage in each other's company. They could not enjoy the friendship of worldly people and would talk only of their Master. "Shall we not behold him again?"—this was the one theme of their thought and the one dream of their sleep. Alone, they wept for him; walking in the streets of Calcutta, they were engrossed in the thought of him. The Master had once said to M., "It becomes difficult for me to give up the body, when I realize that after my death you will wander about weeping for me." Some of them thought: "He is no longer in this world. How surprising that we still enjoy living! We could give up our bodies if we liked, but still we do not." Time and again Sri Ramakrishna had told them that God reveals Himself to His devotees if they yearn for Him and call on Him with whole-souled devotion. He had assured them that God listens to the prayer of a sincere heart.

The young unmarried disciples of the Master, who belonged to his inner circle, had attended on him day and night at the Cossipore garden house. After his passing away most of them returned to their families against their own wills. They had not yet formally renounced the world. For a short while they kept their family names. But Sri Ramakrishna had made them renounce the world mentally. He himself had initiated several of them into the monastic life, giving them the ochre cloths of sannyasis.

Two or three of the Master's attendants had no place to go. To them the large-hearted Surendra said: "Brothers, where will you go? Let us rent a house. You will live there and make it our Master's shrine; and we householders shall come there for consolation. How can we pass all our days and nights with our wives and children in the world? I used to spend a sum of money for the Master at Cossipore. I shall gladly give it now for your expenses." Accordingly he rented a house for them at Baranagore, in the suburbs of Calcutta, and this place became gradually transformed into a math, or monastery.

For the first few months Surendra contributed thirty rupees a month. As the other members joined the monastery one by one, he doubled his contribution, which he later increased to a hundred rupees. The monthly rent

for the house was eleven rupees. The cook received six rupees a month. The rest was spent for food.

The younger Gopal brought the Master's bed and other articles of daily use from the garden house at Cossipore. The brahmin who had been cook at Cossipore was engaged for the new monastery. The first permanent member was the elder Gopal. Sarat spent the nights there. In the beginning Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Nirranjan, and Kali used to visit the monastery every now and then, according to their convenience. Tarak, who had gone to Vrindavan following the Master's death, returned to Calcutta after a few months and soon became a permanent member of the monastery. Rakhal, Jogin, Latu, and Kali were living at Vrindavan with the Holy Mother when the monastery was started. Kali returned to Calcutta within a month, Rakhal after a few months, and Jogin and Latu after a year. The householder devotees frequently visited the monastic brothers and spent hours with them in meditation and study.

After a short time Narendra, Rakhal, Nirranjan, Sarat, Sashi, Baburam, Jogin, Tarak, Kali, and Latu renounced the world for good. Sarada Prasanna and Subodh joined them some time later. Gangadhar, who was very much attached to Narendra, visited the math regularly. It was he who taught the brothers the hymn sung at the evening service in the Siva temple at Benares. He had gone to Tibet to practise austerity ; now, having returned, he lived at the monastery. Two other devotees of the Master, Hari and Tulasi, frequently visited Narendra and his monastic brothers. After some time they finally joined the monastery.

Surendra was indeed a blessed soul. It was he who laid the foundation of the great Order later associated with Sri Ramakrishna's name. His devotion and sacrifice made it possible for those earnest souls to renounce the world for the realization of God. Through him Sri Ramakrishna made it possible for them to live in the world as embodiments of his teaching, the renunciation of "woman and gold" and the realization of God.

The brothers lived at the math like orphan boys. Sometimes they would not have the money to pay their house-rent ; sometimes they would have no food in the monastery. Surendra would come and settle all these things. He was the big brother of the monks. Later on, when they thought of his genuine love, the members of this first math shed tears of gratitude.

The new monastery became known among the Master's devotees as the Baranagore Math. Narendra, Rakhal, and the other young disciples were filled with intense renunciation. One day Rakhal's father came to the math and asked Rakhal to return home. "Why do you take the trouble to come here ?" Rakhal said to him. "I am very happy here. Please pray to God that you may forget me and that I may forget you too." The young disciples said to each other : "We shall never return to the worldly life. The Master enjoined upon us the renunciation of 'woman and gold'. How can we go back to our families ?"

Sashi had taken charge of the daily worship in the math. The Master's relics had been brought from Balaram's house and Sri Ramakrishna was worshipped daily in the worship hall. Narendra supervised the household. He was

the leader of the monastery. He would often tell his brother disciples, "The selfless actions enjoined in the *Gita* are worship, japa, meditation, and so on, and not worldly duties." The brothers at the math depended on him for their spiritual inspiration. He said to them, "We must practise sadhana ; otherwise we shall not be able to realize God."

He and his brother disciples, filled with an ascetic spirit, devoted themselves day and night to the practice of spiritual discipline. Their one goal in life was the realization of God. They followed to their hearts' content the injunctions prescribed in the Vedas, Puranas, and Tantras for an ascetic life. They spent their time in japa and meditation and study of the scriptures. Whenever they would fail to experience the Divine Presence, they would feel as if they were on the rack. They would practise austerity, sometimes alone under trees, sometimes in a cremation ground, sometimes on the bank of the Ganges. Again, sometimes they would spend the entire day in the meditation room of the monastery in japa and contemplation ; sometimes they would gather to sing and dance in a rapture of delight. All of them, and Narendra particularly, were consumed with the desire to see God. Now and then they would say to each other, "Shall we not starve ourselves to death to see God ?"

Monday, February 21, 1887

Narendra, Rakhal, Niranjan, Sarat, Sashi, Kali, Baburam, Tarak, and Sarada Prasanna were living in the monastery. All day the members had been fasting in observance of the Sivaratri.² Sarat, Kali, Niranjan, and Sarada were planning to go to Puri, the following Saturday, on a pilgrimage to the sacred Jagannath. Jogin and Latu were at Vrindavan and had not yet seen the new place.

Narendra had gone to Calcutta that morning to look after a lawsuit in which his family had been involved since the death of his father. At nine o'clock in the morning M. arrived at the math. Tarak saw him and began to sing in praise of Siva, Rakhal joining him :

There Siva dances, striking both His cheeks ; and they resound,
Ba-ba-bom !
Dimi-dimi-dimi ! sounds His drum ; a garland of skulls from His
neck is hanging !
In His matted locks the Ganges hisses ; fire shoots from His mighty
trident !
Round His waist a serpent glitters, and on His brow the moon is
shining !

Rakhal and Tarak danced as they sang. Narendra had recently composed the song.

Sashi finished the morning worship in the shrine. Sarat then sang about Siva to the accompaniment of the tanpura.

² The night of Siva. On this day the devotees observe fast and spend the whole night in meditation, prayer, and other spiritual exercises.

Narendra had just arrived from Calcutta. He had not yet taken his bath. Kali asked him, "What about the lawsuit?" "Why should you bother about it?" Narendra replied sharply.

Narendra was smoking and talking to M. and the others. He said: "Nothing can be achieved in spiritual life without the renunciation of 'woman and gold'. 'Woman' is the doorway to hell. All people are under the control of women. The cases of Siva and Krishna are quite different. Siva turned His Consort into His servant. Sri Krishna, no doubt, led a householder's life. But how unattached He was! How quickly He renounced Vrindavan and the gopis!"

RAKHAL: "And how He renounced Dwaraka, too, where He was king!"

Narendra took his bath in the Ganges and returned to the monastery. He carried his wet cloth and towel in his hand. Sarada prostrated himself before Narendra. He too had been fasting on account of the Sivaratri. He was going to the Ganges for his bath. Narendra entered the worship room and prostrated himself before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna, who was daily worshipped there as the Deity. For a few minutes he was absorbed in meditation.

The devotees assembled in a room and began to converse. The talk turned to Bhavanath. Narendra said, "People like him live like worms in the world."

It was afternoon. Arrangements were being made to worship Siva in the evening. Leaves of the bel-tree were gathered for the worship. Bel-wood was chopped for the homa.

In the evening Sashi, who was in charge of the worship at the monastery, burnt incense before the pictures of the various gods and goddesses.

The worship of Siva was to take place under the bel-tree in the monastery compound. The Deity was to be worshipped four times, during the four watches of the night. The brothers assembled under the bel-tree. Bhupati and M. were present also. One of the young members of the math was in charge of the worship. Kali was reading from the *Gita*. Now and then he argued with Narendra.

KALI: "I alone am everything. I create, preserve, and destroy."

NARENDRA: "How is it possible for me to create? Another power creates through me. Our various actions—even our thoughts—are caused by that power."

M. (to himself): "The Master used to say: 'As long as a man feels that it is he who meditates, he is under the jurisdiction of the Adyasakti. Sakti must be acknowledged.'"

Kali reflected in silence a few moments and then said: "The actions you are talking about are illusory. There is not even any such thing as thought. The very idea of these things makes me laugh."

NARENDRA: "The 'I' that is implied in 'I am He' is not this ego. It is that which remains after one eliminates mind, body, and so on."

After completing the recital of the *Gita*, Kali chanted: "Santih! Santih! Santih!"

Narendra and the other devotees stood up and circled round and round the tree, singing and dancing. Now and then they chanted in chorus : "Siva Guru ! Siva Guru !"

It was midnight, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the moon. Pitch darkness filled all the quarters. Men, birds, and animals were all hushed into silence. The young sannyasis were clad in gerrua robes. The words "Siva Guru", chanted in their full-throated voices, rose into the infinite sky like the rumblings of rain-clouds and disappeared in the Indivisible Satchidananda.

The worship was over. The sun, about to rise, was painting the eastern horizon crimson. In this sacred twilight, the conjunction of night and day, the holy Brahmanuhurta, the young worshippers finished their baths in the Ganges.

It was morning. The devotees went to the shrine room, prostrated themselves before the Deity, and gradually assembled in the big hall. Narendra was clad in a new ochre cloth. The bright orange colour of his apparel blended with the celestial lustre of his face and body, every pore of which radiated a divine light. His countenance was filled with fiery brilliance and yet touched with the tenderness of love. He appeared to all as a bubble that had risen up in the Ocean of Absolute Existence and Bliss and assumed a human body to help in the propagation of his Master's message. All eyes were fixed on him. Narendra was then just twenty-four years old, the very age at which the great Chaitanya had renounced the world.

Balaram had sent fruit and sweets to the monastery for the devotees' breakfast. Rakhal, Narendra, and a few others partook of the refreshments. After eating one or two morsels some of them cried out, "Blessed indeed is Balaram !" All laughed.

Narendra now began to joke like a child. He was imitating Sri Ramakrishna. He put a sweet into his mouth and stood still, as if in samadhi. His eyes remained unwinking. A devotee stepped forward and pretended to hold him up by the hand lest he should drop to the ground. Narendra closed his eyes. A few minutes later, with the sweetmeat still in his mouth, he opened his eyes and drawled out, "I—am—all—right." All laughed loudly.

Refreshments were now given to everyone. M. looked on at this wonderful mart of happiness. The devotees shouted joyfully, "Jai Gurumaharaj !"³

Monday, March 25, 1887

M. arrived at the Baranagore Math to visit his brother disciples. Devendra accompanied him. M. had been coming to the monastery very frequently and now and then had spent a day or two. The previous week he had spent three days at the math. He was very eager to observe the spirit of intense renunciation of these young men.

It was evening. M. intended to spend the night in the monastery. Sashi lighted the lamp in the worship room and chanted the name of God. Next he burnt incense before all the pictures of gods and goddesses in the various

³ Victory to the Guru !

rooms. The evening service began. Sashi conducted the worship. The members of the math, with M. and Devendra, stood with folded hands and sang the hymn of the arati.

When the worship was over, Narendra and M. became engaged in conversation. Narendra was recalling his various meetings with Sri Ramakrishna.

NARENDRA : "One day, during one of my early visits, the Master in an ecstatic mood said to me, 'You have come !' 'How amazing !' I said to myself. 'It is as if he had known me a long time.' Then he said to me, 'Do you ever see light ?' I replied : 'Yes, sir. Before I fall asleep I feel something like a light revolving near my forehead.'"

M : "Do you see it even now ?"

NARENDRA : "I used to see it frequently. In Jadu Mallick's garden house the Master one day touched me and muttered something to himself. I became unconscious. The effect of the touch lingered with me a month, like an intoxication.

"When he heard that a proposal had been made about my marriage, he wept, holding the feet of the image of Kali. With tears in his eyes he prayed to the Divine Mother : 'O Mother, please upset the whole thing ! Don't let Narendra be drowned.'

"After my father's death my mother and my brothers were starving. When the Master met Annada Guha one day, he said to him : 'Narendra's father has died. His family is in a state of great privation. It would be good if his friends helped him now with money.

"After Annada had left I scolded him. I said, 'Why did you say all those things to him ?' Thus rebuked, he wept and said, 'Alas ! for your sake I could beg from door to door.'

"He tamed us by his love. Don't you think so ?"

M : "There is not the slightest doubt about it. His love was utterly unselfish."

NARENDRA : "One day when I was alone with him he said something to me. Nobody else was present. Please don't repeat it to anyone here."

M : "No, I shall not. What did he say ?"

NARENDRA : "He said : 'It is not possible for me to exercise occult powers ; but I shall do so through you. What do you say ?' 'No,' I replied, 'you can't do that.'

"I used to laugh at his words. You must have heard all these things from him. I told him that his visions of God were all hallucinations of his mind.

"He said to me : 'I used to climb to the roof of the kuthi and cry : "O devotees, where are you all ? Come to me, O devotees ! I am about to die. I shall certainly die if I do not see you." And the Divine Mother told me, "The devotees will come." You see, everything is turning out to be true.'

"What else could I say ? I kept quiet.

"One day he closed the door of his room and said to Devendra Babu and Girish Babu, referring to me, 'He will not keep his body if he is told who he is.'

M : "Yes, we have heard that. Many a time he repeated the same thing to us, too. Once you came to know about your true Self in nirvikalpa samadhi at the Cossipore garden house. Isn't that true?"

NARENDRA : "Yes. In that experience I felt that I had no body. I could see only my face. The Master was in the upstairs room. I had that experience downstairs. I was weeping. I said, 'What has happened to me?' The elder Gopal went to the Master's room and said, 'Narendra is crying.'

"When I saw the Master he said to me : 'Now you have known. But I am going to keep the key with me.'

"I said to him, 'What is it that happened to me?'

"Turning to the devotees, he said : 'He will not keep his body if he knows who he is. But I have put a veil over his eyes.'

"One day he said to me, 'You can see Krishna in your heart if you want.' I replied, 'I don't believe in Krishna or any such nonsense!' (*Both M. and Narendra laugh.*)

"I have noticed a peculiar thing. Some men, objects, or places make me feel as if I had seen them before, in a previous birth. They appear familiar to me. One day I went to Sarat's house in Calcutta, on Amherst Street. Immediately I said to Sarat : 'This house seems familiar to me. It seems to me that I have known the rooms, the passages, and the rest of the house for many, many days.

"I used to follow my own whims in everything I did. The Master never interfered. You know that I became a member of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj."

M : "Yes, I know that."

NARENDRA : "The Master knew that women attended the meetings of the Brahmo Samaj. A man cannot meditate with women sitting in front of him ; therefore he criticized the meditation of the Brahmo Samaj. But he didn't object to my going there. But one day he said to me, 'Don't tell Rakhal about your being a member of the Brahmo Samaj, or he too will feel like becoming one.'"

M : "You have greater strength of mind. That is why the Master didn't prevent your going to the Samaj."

NARENDRA : "I have attained my present state of mind as a result of much suffering and pain. You have not passed through any such suffering. I now realize that without trials and tribulations one cannot resign oneself to God and depend on Him absolutely.

"Well, X—is so modest and humble ! He is totally self-effacing. Can you tell me how I can develop humility?"

M : "Speaking about your ego, the Master said, 'Whose ego is it?'"

NARENDRA : "What did he mean?"

M : "A friend one day said to Radhika : 'You are egotistic. That is why you insulted Krishna.' Whereupon another friend said to the first : 'Yes, Radhika is egotistic, no doubt. But whose ego is it?' What she meant was that Radha was egotistic because she regarded Krishna as her Lord. It was Krishna Himself who kept that ego in Radha.

"What the Master meant was that it is God alone who has kept this ego in you, so that He may accomplish many things through you."

NARENDRA : "But my ego loudly proclaims to all that I have no suffering."

M. (smiling) : "You may loudly proclaim it, if that be your sweet will."

The conversation turned to other devotees.

NARENDRA : "The Master said about Vijay Goswami, 'He is knocking at the door.'"

M : "That is to say, he has not yet entered the room. At Syampukur Vijay said to the Master, 'I saw you at Dacca in this tangible form, in this very body.' You were there too."

NARENDRA : "Devendra Babu and Ram Babu want to renounce the world. They are trying hard. Ram Babu told me privately that he would give up the world after two years."

M : "After two years ? After making provision for his children ?"

NARENDRA : "Besides, he will rent his present house and buy a small house. Other relatives will arrange his daughter's marriage."

M : "Gopal is in an exalted state of mind, isn't he ?"

NARENDRA : "What do you mean ?"

M : "So much emotion, so much weeping and such exaltation in the name of God !"

NARENDRA : "Does mere emotion make a man spiritually great ? Youngsters like Kali, Sarat, Sashi, and Sarada are more spiritual than Gopal. How great their renunciation is ! Gopal does not accept the Master, does he ?"

M : "That is true. The Master remarked that Gopal did not belong to the circle of his devotees. But I saw him show great reverence for Sri Ramakrishna."

NARENDRA : "What did you see ?"

M : "At that time I was just becoming acquainted with Sri Ramakrishna. One day, after the meeting of the devotees in his room had broken up, I came out and saw Gopal on the foot-path, kneeling with folded hands before the Master. The moon was shining brightly overhead. It was the red path sprinkled with brick-dust, just outside the long verandah north of the Master's room. Nobody else was there. It appeared to me that Gopal had taken shelter at Sri Ramakrishna's feet and the Master was encouraging him."

NARENDRA : "I didn't see it."

M : "Further, the Master used to say, 'Gopal is in the state of a paramahansa.' But I also distinctly remember his forbidding Gopal to be intimate with woman devotees. Many a time he warned about it."

NARENDRA : "Speaking to me about Gopal, the Master asked why, if Gopal was a real paramahansa, he should hanker after money. 'He doesn't belong to this place', the Master said. 'Those who are my own will always come here.' He used to be angry with T—because he was Gopal's constant companion and didn't come to the Master more often. 'Gopal has spiritual realizations, no doubt,' the Master said to me, 'but he has attained them all of a

⁴ Referring to Nityagopal.

sudden, without the necessary preparations. He is not one of my own. If he is, why haven't I wept for him ?

"Some are proclaiming Gopal as the reincarnation of Nityananda. But times without number the Master said to me : 'In me alone are embodied Advaita, Chaitanya, and Nityananda.' I am all these three."

Friday, April 8, 1887

About eight o'clock in the morning two devotees, one a householder and the other a monk, were conversing in a room in the Baranagore monastery when M. came in. The devotees were of the same age—twenty-four or twenty-five years old. M. intended to spend three days at the monastery. He went to the shrine and saluted the Deity. After visiting Narendra, Rakhal, and the other brothers, he at last came into the room where the two devotees were engaged in conversation. The householder devotee wanted to renounce the world. The monk was trying to persuade him not to do so.

MONK : "Why don't you finish the few duties you have in the world ? Very soon they will be left behind.

"A man was told that he would go to hell. He asked a friend, 'What is hell like ?' Thereupon the friend began to draw a picture of hell on the ground with a piece of chalk. No sooner was the picture drawn than the man rolled over it and said, 'Now I have gone through hell !'"

HOUSEHOLDER : "I don't relish worldly life. Ah, how happy you are here !"

MONK : "Why don't you renounce the world, if you want to ? Why do you talk about it so much ? But I repeat, why don't you enjoy the fun once for all ?"

Sashi finished the regular worship in the worship hall. About eleven the brothers of the math returned from the Ganges after taking their baths. They put on clean cloths, went to the shrine, prostrated themselves before the Deity, and meditated there a little while.

After the food was offered to the Deity they had their meal. M. ate with them.

It was evening. Incense was burnt before the pictures of gods and goddesses and the evening service was performed. Rakhal, Sashi, the elder Gopal, and Harish were seated in the big hall. M. also was there. Rakhal warned one of the brothers to be careful about the food to be offered to the Master in the shrine.

RAKHAL (to Sashi and the others) : "One day I ate part of his [meaning the Master's] refreshments before he took them. At this he said : 'I cannot look at you. How could you do such a thing ?' I burst into tears."

THE ELDER GOPAL : "One day at Cossipore I breathed hard on his food. At this he said, 'Take that food away.'"

M. and Narendra were pacing the verandah and recalling old times.

NARENDRA : "I did not believe in anything."

M : "You mean the forms of God ?"

⁵ Advaita and Nityananda were intimate companions of Chaitanya.



NARENDRA : " At first I did not accept most of what the Master said. One day he asked me, ' Then why do you come here ? ' I replied, ' I come here to see you, not to listen to you.' "

M : " What did he say to that ? "

NARENDRA : " He was very much pleased. "

Saturday, April 9, 1887

The members of the math were resting a little after their meal. Narendra and M. sat under a tree in the garden to the west of the monastery. It was a solitary place and no one else was present. Narendra was recounting to M. his various experiences with Sri Ramakrishna. Narendra was about twenty-four years old, and M. thirty-two.

M : " You must remember vividly your first visit to him. "

NARENDRA : " Yes. It was at the temple garden at Dākshineswar, in his own room. That day I sang two songs. "

Narendra sang them for M. :

Let us go back once more, O mind, to our own abode !
Here in this foreign land of earth
Why should we wander aimlessly in stranger's guise ?
These living beings round about, and the five elements,
Are strangers to you, all of them ; none is your own.
Why do you thus forget yourself,
In love with strangers, O my mind ?
Why do you thus forget your own ?

Ascend the path of Truth, O mind ! Unflaggingly climb,
With Love as the lamp to light your way.
As your provision for the journey, bring with you
The virtues, carefully concealed ; for, like two highwaymen,
Greed and delusion wait to rob you of your wealth.
And keep beside you constantly,
As guards to shelter you from harm,
Calmness of mind and self-control.

Companionship with holy men will be for you
A welcome rest-house by the road ;
There rest your weary limbs awhile, asking your way,
If ever you should be in doubt, of him who watches there.
If anything along the path should frighten you,
Then loudly shout the name of the Lord ;
For He is Ruler of that road,
And even Death must bow to Him.

* * *

O Lord, must all my days pass by so utterly in vain ?
Down the path of hope I gaze with longing, day and night.
Thou art the Lord of all the worlds, and I but a beggar here ;
How can I ask of Thee to come and dwell within my heart ?
My poor heart's humble cottage door is standing open wide ;
Be gracious, Lord, and enter there but once, and quench its thirst !

M : " What did he say after listening to your songs ? "

NARENDRA : " He went into samadhi. He said to Ram Babu : ' Who is this boy ? How well he sings ! ' He asked me to come again."

M : " Where did you see him next ?"

NARENDRA : " At Rajmohan's house. The third visit was at Dakshineswar again. During that visit he went into samadhi and began to praise me as if I were God. He said to me, ' O Narayana, you have assumed this body for my sake.' But please don't tell this to anybody else."

M : " What else did he say ?"

NARENDRA : " He said : ' You have assumed this body for my sake. I asked the Divine Mother, " Mother, unless I enjoy the company of some genuine devotees completely free from ' woman and gold ', how shall I live on earth ? "' Then he said to me, ' You came to me at night, woke me up, and said, " Here I am ! "' But I did not know anything of this. I was sound asleep in our Calcutta house."

M : " In other words, you may be both present and absent at the same time. It is like God, who is both formless and endowed with form."

NARENDRA : " But you must not tell this to anyone else. At Cossipore he transmitted his power to me."

M : " Didn't it happen when you used to meditate before a lighted fire under a tree at the Cossipore garden house ?"

NARENDRA : " Yes. One day, while meditating, I asked Kali to hold my hand. Kali said to me, ' When I touched your body I felt something like an electric shock coming to my body.'

" But you must not tell this to anybody here. Give me your promise."

M : " There is a special purpose in his transmission of power to you. He will accomplish much work through you. One day the Master wrote on a piece of paper, ' Naren will teach people.' "

NARENDRA : " But I said to him, ' I won't do any such thing.' Thereupon he said, ' Your very bones will do it.' He has given me charge of Sarat. Sarat is now yearning for God ; the Kundalini is awakened in him."

M : " He must be careful that dead leaves do not accumulate there. Perhaps you remember what the Master used to say : ' In a lake the fish make holes so that they may rest there. But if dead leaves accumulate in the holes the fish do not go there.' "

NARENDRA : " The Master used to call me Narayana."

M : " Yes, I know he did."

NARENDRA : " When he was ill he would not allow me to pour water to wash his hands. At Cossipore he said : ' Now the key is in my hands. He will give up his body when he knows who he is.' "

M : " Didn't he say it when you were in nirvikalpa samadhi ?"

NARENDRA : " Yes. At the time it seemed to me I had no body. I felt only my face."

" I was studying law at home to prepare for the examinations. Suddenly I said to myself, ' What am I doing ?' "

M : " Didn't it happen when the Master was at Cossipore ?"



NARENDRA : " Yes. Like an insane person I ran out of our house. He asked me, 'What do you want ?' I replied, 'I want to remain immersed in samadhi.' He said : 'What a small mind you have ! Go beyond samadhi ! Samadhi is a very trifling thing.' "

M : " Yes, he used to say that vijñana is the stage after jñana. It is like going up and down the stairs after reaching the roof. "

NARENDRA : " Kali has a craving for knowledge. I scold him for that. Is knowledge so easy to get ? Let his bhakti first mature. The Master told Tarak at Dakshineswar that emotion and bhakti are by no means the last word. "

M : " What other things did he say about you ? "

NARENDRA : " Once I said to him, 'The forms of God and things like that, which you see in your visions, are all figments of your imagination.' He had so much faith in my words that he went to the Divine Mother in the temple and told Her what I had said to him. He asked Her, 'Are these hallucinations, then ?' Afterwards he said to me, 'Mother told me that all these are real.' "

" Perhaps you remember that he said to me, 'When you sing, He who dwells here (*touching his heart*), like a snake, hisses as it were, and then, spreading His hood, quietly holds Himself steady and listens to your music.' "

" He has no doubt said many things about me ; but what have I realized ? "

M : " Now you have put on the garb of Siva ; you cannot touch money. Do you remember the Master's story ? "

NARENDRA : " Please tell it to me. "

M : " A bahurupi⁶ disguised himself as Siva and visited a house. The master of the house wanted to give him a rupee, but he did not accept it. Then the mendicant went home, removed his disguise, came back to the gentleman, and asked for the rupee. 'Why didn't you accept it before ?' he was asked. He said : 'I was impersonating Siva, a sannyasi. I couldn't touch money at that time.' "

When Narendra heard the story he laughed a long while.

M : " You have now put on the garb of a physician, as it were. You have become the guardian of these young men. Yours is the entire responsibility. You have to bring up the brothers of the monastery. "

NARENDRA : " Whatever spiritual disciplines we are practising here are in obedience to the Master's command. But it is strange that Ram Babu criticizes us for our spiritual practices. He says :⁷ 'We have seen him.' What need have we of any such practice ? "

M : " Let people act according to their faith. "

NARENDRA : " But the Master asked us to practise sadhana. "

Narendra was again telling M. about the Master's love for him.

NARENDRA : " How many times he prayed to the Divine Mother for my sake ! After my father's death, when I had no food at home and my mother and sisters and brothers were starving too, the Master prayed to the Divine Mother to give me money. "

M : " Yes, I know that. You once told me. "

⁶ A professional impersonator.

⁷ Sri Ramakrishna.



NARENDRA : " But I didn't get any money. The Master told me what the Divine Mother had said to him : ' He will get simple food and clothing. He will eat rice and dal.' "

" He loved me so much ! But whenever an impure idea crept into my mind he at once knew about it. While going around with Annada, sometimes I found myself in the company of evil people. On those occasions the Master could not eat any food from my hands. He could raise his hand only a little, and could not bring it to his mouth. On one such occasion, while he was ill, he brought his hand very close to his mouth, but it did not go in. He said to me, ' You are not yet ready.' "

" Now and then I feel great scepticism. At Baburam's house it seemed to me that nothing existed—as if there were no such thing as God." "

M : " The Master used to say that he too had passed through that mood." "

Both M. and Narendra remained silent. Then M. said : " You are all indeed blessed ! You think of the Master day and night." "

NARENDRA : " But how little it is ! We don't yet feel like giving up the body because we haven't realized God." "

It was night. Niranjana had just returned from Puri. The members of the math, and M., greeted him with great joy. Niranjana was telling them his experiences. He was then about twenty-five years old.

The evening worship was over. Some of the brothers were meditating. But many of them assembled in the big hall around Niranjana. They were talking. After nine o'clock Sashi offered food to the Deity.

The members of the math finished their supper, which consisted of home-made bread, a little vegetable, and a little hard molasses.

Saturday, May 7, 1887

It was the full-moon day of the month of Vaisakh. Narendra and M. were seated on a couch in M.'s study in Calcutta. They were talking. Just before Narendra's arrival M. had been studying *The Merchant of Venice*, *Comus*, and Blackie's *Self-culture*, which he taught at school.

Narendra and the other brothers of the monastery were full of yearning for God-realization. A fire of intense renunciation raged in their hearts.

NARENDRA : " I don't care for anything. You see, I am now talking with you, but I feel like getting up this minute and running away." "

Narendra sat in silence a few minutes. Then he said, " I shall fast to death for the realization of God." "

M : " That is good. One can do anything for God." "

NARENDRA : " But suppose I cannot control my hunger." "

M : " Then eat something and begin over again." "

Narendra remained silent a few minutes.

NARENDRA : " It seems there is no God. I pray so much, but there is no reply—none whatsoever." "



"How many visions I have seen ! How many mantras shining in letters of gold ! How many visions of the Goddess Kali ! How many other divine forms ! But still I have no peace.

"Will you kindly give me six pice ?"

Narendra asked for the money to pay his carriage hire to the Baranagore Math. Just then Satkari arrived in a carriage. Of the same age as Narendra, he dearly loved the members of the monastery. He lived near the math and worked in Calcutta. The carriage was his own. Narendra returned the money to M. and said that he would go with Satkari in his carriage. He asked M. to give them some refreshments.

M. accompanied the two friends to the Baranagore Math. He wanted to see how the brothers spent their time and practised sadhana. He wanted to see how Sri Ramakrishna, the Master, was reflected in the hearts of the disciples. Niranjan was not at the math. He had gone home to visit his mother, the only relative he had in the world. Baburam, Sarat, and Kali had gone to Puri. They intended to spend a few days there.

Narendra was in charge of the members of the monastery. Prasanna⁸ had been practising austere sadhana for the past few days. Once Narendra had told him of his desire to fast to death for the realization of God. During Narendra's absence in Calcutta, Prasanna had left the monastery for an unknown destination. When Narendra heard about it, he said to the brothers, "Why did Raja⁹ allow him to go ?" But Rakhal had not been in the monastery at the time, having gone to the Dakshineswar temple for a stroll.

NARENDRA : "Just let Raja come back to the monastery ! I shall scold him. Why did he allow Prasanna to go away ? (*To Harish*) I am sure you were lecturing him then, standing with your feet apart. Couldn't you prevent his going away ?"

Harish replied in a very low voice, "Brother Tarak asked him not to go, but still he went away."

NARENDRA (*to M.*) : "You see what a lot of trouble I am in ! Here, too, I am involved in a world of maya. Who knows where this boy has gone ?"

Rakhal returned from Dakshineswar. Bhavanath had accompanied him.

Narendra told Rakhal about Prasanna's going away from the monastery. Prasanna had left a letter for Narendra. This was the substance of the letter : "I am going to Vrindavan on foot. It is very risky for me to live here. Here my mind is undergoing a change. Formerly I used to dream about my parents and other relatives. Then I dreamt of woman, the embodiment of maya. I have suffered twice ; I had to go back to my relatives at home. Therefore I am going far away from them. The Master once told me, 'Your people at home are apt to do anything ; never trust them.'"

Rakhal said : "These are the reasons for his going away. Once he remarked : 'Narendra often goes home to look after his mother, brothers, and

⁸ Sarada Prasanna, one of the Master's young disciples, was addressed as Prasanna by Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples.

⁹ Rakhal was addressed as "Raja" by all the brothers. "Rakhal-Raj", the "King of the cowherd boys", is one of the names of Sri Krishna, and Sri Ramakrishna often spoke of Rakhal as one of the intimate companions of Krishna.



SWAMI TRIGUNATITA (PRASANNA)



SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA (LATU)



SWAMI AKHANDANANDA
(GANGADHAR)



sisters. And he supervises the family's lawsuit. I am afraid that I too may feel like going home, following his example."

Narendra remained silent.

Rakhal was talking to them about making pilgrimages. He said : " We have achieved nothing by staying here. The Master always exhorted us to realize God. Have we succeeded ? "

Rakhal lay down. The other devotees were either lying down or sitting.

RAKHAL : " Let us go to the Narmada."

NARENDRA : " What will you achieve by wandering about ? Can one ever attain jnana, that you are talking about it so much ? "

A DEVOTEE : " Then why have you renounced the world ? "

NARENDRA : " Must we live with Shyam because we have not seen Ram ? Must we go on begetting children because we have not realized God ? What are you talking about ? "

Narendra went out, returning after a few minutes. Rakhal was still lying down.

A member of the monastery who was also lying down said teasingly, feigning great suffering on account of his separation from God : " Ah ! Please get me a knife. I have no more use for this life. I can't stand this pain any more ! "

NARENDRA (*feigning seriousness*) : " It is there. Stretch out your hand and take it."

Everybody laughed.

The conversation again turned to Prasanna.

NARENDRA : " Even here we are involved in maya. Why have we become sannyasis, I wonder ? "

RAKHAL : " I have read in a book that sannyasis should not live together. The author has described a city of sannyasis."

SASHI : " I don't care about sannyas or any such thing. There is no place where I cannot live."

They were talking of Bhavanath, whose wife had been seriously ill. Narendra said to Rakhal : " I understand that his wife has been snatched from the jaws of death. Is that why he went to Dakshineswar to enjoy the fresh air ? "

Ram Babu intended to build a temple in the garden at Kankurgachi, where some of Sri Ramakrishna's ashes were buried.

NARENDRA (*to Rakhal*) : " Ram Babu has made M. one of the trustees of the garden."

M. (*to Rakhal*) : " But I don't know anything about it."

It was dusk. Sashi burnt incense before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna in the worship room and then before the pictures of gods and goddesses in the other rooms.

The evening worship began. The members of the math and the other devotees stood with folded hands near the door of the shrine and witnessed the arati. Then they all sang in chorus the following hymn to Siva, to the accompaniment of bell and gong :



Jaya Siva Omkara, Bhaja Siva Omkara,
Brahma Vishnu Sadasiva,
Hara Hara Hara Mahadeva !

Narendra had introduced this song for the evening worship. It is sung in the temple of Siva in Benares.

It was eleven o'clock at night when their supper was over. The brothers prepared a bed for M., and all went to sleep.

It was midnight. M. was wide awake. He said to himself : " Everything is as it was before. The same Ayodhya—only Rama is not there." M. silently left his bed. It was the full-moon night of Vaisakh, the thrice-blessed day of the Buddhists, associated with Buddha's birth, realization, and passing away. M. was walking alone on the bank of the Ganges, contemplating the Master.

It was Sunday. M. had arrived the day before and was planning to stay till Wednesday. The householder devotees generally visited the monastery on Sundays.

The *Yogavasishtha* was being studied and explained. M. had heard a little about the teachings of this book from Sri Ramakrishna. It taught the absolute identity of Brahman and the soul, and the unreality of the world. The Master had forbidden him and the other householder devotees to practise spiritual discipline following the method of the Advaita Vedanta, since the attitude of the oneness of the soul and God is harmful for one still identified with the body. For such a devotee, the Master used to say, it was better to look on God as the Lord and oneself as His servant.

The conversation turned to the *Yogavasishtha*.

M : " Well, how is Brahmajñana described in the *Yogavasishtha* ? "

RAKHAL : " Hunger, thirst, pain, pleasure, and so on, are all maya. The annihilation of the mind is the only means to the realization of Brahman. "

M : " What remains after the annihilation of the mind is Brahman. Is that not true ? "

RAKHAL : " Yes. "

M : " Sri Ramakrishna used to say that. Nangta taught him that away. Have you found in the book that Vasishtha asked Rama to lead a householder's life ? "

RAKHAL : " I haven't yet found anything like that in the book. Rama is not even admitted by the author to be an Incarnation of God. "

Presently Narendra, Tarak, and another devotee returned from the bank of the Ganges. They had intended to go to Konnagar, on the other side of the river, but had been unable to find a ferry-boat. They sat down. The conversation about the *Yogavasishtha* went on.

NARENDRA (to M.) : " There are many nice stories in the book. Do you know the incident of Lila ? "

M : " Yes, I have read the book here and there. Lila had attained Brahmajñana. "

NARENDRA : " Yes. Do you remember the story of Indra and Ahalya, and the story of how King Viduratha became a chandala ? "

M : "Yes, I remember."

NARENDRA : "What a wonderful description of the forest !"

Narendra and the other devotees were going to the Ganges to bathe. M. accompanied them. The sun was very hot ; so M. took his umbrella. Sarat, a devotee from Baranagore, was going with them to take his bath. He often visited the monastery.

M. (to Sarat) : "It is very hot."

NARENDRA : "Is that your excuse for taking the umbrella ?"

M. laughed.

The members of the monastery were clad in gerrua.

M. (to Narendra) : "It is really very hot. One is liable to get a sunstroke."

NARENDRA : "I see that your body is the obstacle in your path of renunciation. Isn't that so ? I mean you, Devendra Babu—"

M. laughed and said to himself, "Is it merely the body ?"

After bathing, the devotees returned to the monastery. They washed their feet and entered the worship room. Saluting the Deity, they offered flowers.

Narendra was a little late in coming to the worship room. He found that there was no flower on the tray. There were only a few bel-leaves. He sprinkled the leaves with sandal-paste and offered them to Sri Ramakrishna. He rang the bell, saluted the Deity again, and joined the other brothers in the big hall, which was known as the room of the "danas".

The members of the math called themselves the "danas" and the "daityas", which mean the "ghosts" and the "demons", the companions of Siva. They took these names because of their utter indifference to worldly pleasures and relationships.

The southernmost room of the second floor was used for meditation, contemplation, and study, and was known as Kali Tapasvi's room, since Kali used to shut himself in there most of the day. North of this room was the worship room, and north of that, again, was the room where the offerings for the worship were prepared. From this room the devotees used to watch the evening worship. North of the "offering room" was the room of the "danas", a very long hall where the members of the math used to assemble. Here the householder devotees and visitors were received. North of this hall was a small room where the devotees took their meals. East of the worship room and of Kali Tapasvi's room ran a long verandah, at the south-west corner of which was the library of a society of Baranagore. Between Kali Tapasvi's room and this library was a staircase ; and north of the dining room was another staircase, leading to the roof.

Narendra and the other members of the math often spent their evenings on this roof. There they devoted a great deal of time to discussion of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sankaracharya, Ramanuja, and Jesus Christ, and of Hindu philosophy, European philosophy, the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantras.

Narendra, who had a beautiful voice, used to sing in the room of the "danas" and teach music to Sarat and a few others. Kali used to take lessons

on the instruments. Many, many happy hours they spent together in that hall, dancing and singing.

Narendra was sitting with the devotees in the room of the "danas". The conversation turned to religious preaching.

M. (to Narendra) : "Vidyasagar says that he does not speak about God to anyone for fear of being caned."

NARENDRA : "For fear of being caned ? What does he mean ?"

M : "This is what Vidyasagar says : 'Suppose that after death we all go to God. The emissaries of Death will have sent Keshab Sen there too. Keshab Sen, no doubt, committed sins while he lived on earth. When that is proved, perhaps God will say, "Give him twenty-five stripes." Then suppose I am taken to God. I used to go to Keshab Sen's Brahmo Samaj in my earthly life. I too have committed many sins ; so I too am ordered to be caned. Then suppose I say to God that I acted in that sinful way because I listened to Keshab's preaching. Thereupon God will ask His emissaries to bring Keshab back. When he is brought, the Almighty Lord will say to him : "Did you really preach that way ? You yourself knew nothing about spiritual matters and yet you had the hardihood to teach others about God ! Emissaries, give him twenty-five stripes more."'"

Everybody laughed.

M : "Therefore Vidyasagar says : 'I cannot take care of my own self ; should I be foolish enough to get an additional caning for misleading others ? I myself do not understand God. How shall I lecture to others about Him ?'"

NARENDRA : "How has he—who could not understand God—understood other things ?"

M : "What other things ?"

NARENDRA : "He says that he has not understood God. But how, then, can he understand charity and doing good to others ? How can he understand about the school ? How can he understand about educating boys by establishing schools ? How can he understand that it is right to enter the world, marry, and beget children ?

"He who rightly understands one thing understands everything else."

M. (to himself) : "Yes, Sri Ramakrishna, too, said that he who knows God knows everything else. Further, he said to Vidyasagar that leading a worldly life, establishing schools, and so on are the outcome of rajas. The Master also said that Vidyasagar's philanthropy was due to the influence of sâttva on rajas. Such rajas is not harmful."

After their meal the brothers of the monastery rested. M. and Chunilal were conversing. Chunilal told M. of his first visit to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. He also told him how at one time he had felt disgusted with the world, had renounced it, and had wandered about in holy places. A few minutes later Narendra came and sat by them. He asked the younger Gopal to prepare a smoke for him. The latter had been meditating. Narendra said to him : "I say ! Prepare a smoke. What do you mean by this meditation ? First of all prepare yourself for spiritual life by serving God and holy men ;

then you will be able to meditate. First of all karma, and then meditation." Everybody laughed.

There was a big plot of wooded land to the west of the monastery compound. M. was seated alone under a tree, when suddenly Prasanna appeared. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon.

M : "Where have you been all these days ? Everyone has been so worried about you. Have you seen the brothers ? When did you arrive ?"

PRASANNA : "Just now. Yes, I have seen them."

M : "You left a note saying that you were going to Vrindavan. We were terribly worried about you. How far did you go ?"

PRASANNA : "Only as far as Konnagar."¹⁰

Both of them laughed.

M : "Sit down. Tell me all about it. Where did you stop first ?"

PRASANNA : "At the Dakshineswar temple garden. I spent one night there."

M. (smiling) : "What is Hazra's present mood ?"

PRASANNA : "Hazra asked me, 'What do you think of me ?'"

Both laughed.

M. (smiling) : "What did you say ?"

PRASANNA : "I said nothing."

M : "Then ?"

PRASANNA : "Then he asked me whether I had brought tobacco for him."

Both laughed.

PRASANNA : "He wanted me to wait on him." (Laughter.)

M : "Where did you go next ?"

PRASANNA : "By degrees I got to Konnagar. I spent the night in the open. I intended to proceed farther and asked some gentlemen whether I could procure enough money there for a railway ticket to the up-country."

M : "What did they say ?"

PRASANNA : "They said, you may get a rupee or so ; but who will give you the whole fare ?"

Both laughed.

M : "What did you take with you ?"

PRASANNA : "Oh, one or two pieces of cloth and a picture of the Master. I didn't show the picture to anybody."

Sashi's father came to the math. He wanted to take his son home. During Sri Ramakrishna's illness Sashi had nursed the Master for nine months with unswerving zeal. He had won a scholarship in the Entrance Examination for his academic ability and had studied up to the B.A., but he had not appeared at the examination. His father, a poor brahmin, was a devout Hindu and spent much of his time in spiritual practice. Sashi was his eldest son. His parents had hoped that, after completing his education, he would earn money and remove the family's financial difficulties. But Sashi had renounced the world for the realization of God. Whenever he thought of his

¹⁰ A small town only a few miles from Baranagore, on the other side of the Ganges.

father and mother he felt great anguish of heart. Many a time he said to his friends, with tears in his eyes : " I am at a loss as to my duty. Alas, I could not serve my parents ; I could not be of any use to them. What great hope they placed in me ! On account of our poverty my mother did not have any jewelry. I cherished the desire to buy some for her. But now all my hopes are frustrated ; it is impossible for me to return home. My Master asked me to renounce ' woman and gold '. I simply cannot return home."

After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away Sashi's father had hoped that his son would come back to his family. The boy had spent a few days at home, but immediately after the establishment of the new monastery he had begun to frequent it and, after a few days, had decided to remain there as one of the members. Every now and then his father came to the monastery to persuade him to come home ; but he had not succeeded.

This day, on learning that his father had come, Sashi fled the monastery by another door. He did not want to meet him.

Sashi's father knew M. They paced the upper verandah together and talked.

SASHI'S FATHER : " Who is in charge of this place ? Narendra alone is the cause of all the mischief. For a while all these young men returned home and devoted themselves to their studies."

M : " There is no master here. They are all equals. What can Narendra do ? Can a man renounce home against his own will ? Have we householders, for instance, been able to give up our homes altogether ?"

SASHI'S FATHER : " You are doing the right thing. You are serving both the world and God. Can't one practise religion after your method ? That is exactly what we want Sashi to do. Let him live at home and come here too. You have no idea how much his mother weeps for him."

M. became sad and said nothing.

SASHI'S FATHER : " And if you speak of searching for holy men, I know where to find a good one. Let Sashi go to him."

Rakhal and M. were walking on the verandah to the east of Kali Tapasvi's room.

RAKHAL (*earnestly*) : " M., let us practise sadhana ! We have renounced home for good. When someone says, ' You have not realized God by renouncing home ; then why all this fuss ?', Narendra gives a good retort. He says, ' Because we could not attain Ram, must we live with Shyam' and beget children ?' Ah ! Every now and then Narendra says nice things. You had better ask him."

M : " What you say is right. I see that you too have become restless for God."

RAKHAL : " M., how can I describe the state of my mind ? Today at noontime I felt great yearning for the Narmada. M., please practise sadhana ; otherwise you will not succeed. Even Sukadeva was afraid of this world. That is why immediately after his birth he fled the world. His father asked him to wait, but he ran straight away."

M: "Yes, the *Yogopanishad* describes how Sukadeva fled this world of maya. It also describes Vyasa's conversation with Suka. Vyasa asked his son to practise religion in the world. But Suka said that the one essential thing is the Lotus Feet of God. He also expressed his disgust with worldly men for getting married and living with women."

RAKHAL: "Many people think that it is enough not to look at the face of a woman. But what will you gain merely by turning your eyes to the ground at the sight of a woman? Narendra put it very well last night, when he said: 'Woman exists for a man as long as he has lust. Free from lust, one sees no difference between man and woman.'"

M: "How true it is! Children do not see the difference between man and woman."

RAKHAL: "Therefore I say that we must practise spiritual discipline. How can one attain Knowledge without going beyond maya?"

"Let's go to the big hall. Some gentlemen have come from Baranagore. Narendra is talking with them. Let's go and listen to him."

M. did not enter the room. As he was pacing outside he overheard some of the conversation.

NARENDRA: "There is no fixed time or place for the sandhya and other devotions."

GENTLEMAN: "Sir, can one realize God through spiritual practice alone?"

NARENDRA: "Realization depends on God's grace. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita* :

The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them, by His maya, to revolve as if mounted on a machine. Take refuge in Him with all thy heart, O Bharata. By His grace wilt thou attain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode.

"Without the grace of God mere worship and prayer do not help at all. Therefore one should take refuge in Him."

GENTLEMAN: "May we come now and then and disturb you?"

NARENDRA: "Please come whenever you like. We take our baths in the Ganges at your ghat."

GENTLEMAN: "I don't mind that. But please see that others don't use it."

NARENDRA: "We shall not use your ghat, if that is what you mean."

GENTLEMAN: "No, I don't mean exactly that. But if you see other people using it, then you had better not go."

It was dusk. The evening worship was over. The devotees, as usual, sang in chorus, "Jaya Siva Omkara". Afterwards they assembled in the room of the "danas". M., too, was seated there. Prasanna was reading from the *Guru Gita*.

Narendra sang :

I salute the Eternal Teacher, who is the Embodiment of the Bliss of Brahman,

The Essence of knowledge and liberation, the Giver of Supreme Joy ;
 Who is all-pervading, like the akasa, and is the goal of the Vedanta's teachings ;
 Who is One, eternal, stainless, pure, and is the constant Witness of all things ;
 Who dwells beyond all moods, transcending the three gunas.

Narendra sang again :

There is none higher than the Guru, none better than the Guru ;
 This is what Siva has declared.
 I shall sing of the blessed Guru, the Supreme Brahman ;
 I shall worship the blessed Guru, the Supreme Brahman ;
 I shall meditate on the blessed Guru, the Supreme Brahman ;
 I shall bow down to the blessed Guru, the Supreme Brahman.

As Narendra sang these verses from the *Guru Gita* in his melodious voice, the minds of the devotees became steady, like a candle-flame in a windless place.

Rakhal was seated in Kali Tapasvi's room. Prasanna sat near him. M., too, was there.

Rakhal had renounced the world, leaving behind his wife and child. A fire of intense renunciation burnt day and night in his heart. He was thinking seriously of going away, by himself, to the bank of the Narmada or some other holy place. Still, he was trying to persuade Prasanna not to run away from the monastery.

RAKHAL (*to Prasanna*) : "Where do you want to go, running away from here ? Here you are in the company of holy men. Wouldn't it be foolish to run away from this ? Where will you find another like Narendra ?"

PRASANNA : "My parents live in Calcutta. I am afraid of being drawn by their love. That is why I want to flee to a distant place."

RAKHAL : "Can our parents love us as intensely as Gurumaharaj [meaning Sri Ramakrishna] did ? What have we done for him, to deserve all this love ? Why was he so eager for our welfare in body, mind, and soul ? What have we done for him, to deserve all this ?"

M. (*to himself*) : "Ah ! Rakhal is right. Therefore a person like Sri Ramakrishna is described as the 'Ocean of Mercy without any reason'."

PRASANNA (*to Rakhal*) : "Don't you yourself feel like running away from here ?"

RAKHAL : "Yes, now and then I have a fancy to spend a few days on the bank of the Narmada. I say to myself, 'Let me go to a place like that and practise sadhana in a garden.' Again, I feel a strong desire to practise panchatapa for three days. But I hesitate to live in a garden that belongs to worldly people."

Tarak and Prasanna were talking in the room of the "danas". Tarak had lost his mother. His father, like Rakhal's father, had married a second time. Tarak himself had married but had lost his wife. Now the monastery was his home. He too was trying to persuade Prasanna to live there.

PRASANNA : "I have neither jnana nor prema. What have I in the world for a support ?"

TARAK : "It is no doubt difficult to attain jnana ; but how can you say you have no prema ?"

PRASANNA : "I have not yet wept for God. How can I say I have prema ? What have I realized in all these days ?"

TARAK : "But you have seen the Master. And why do you say that you have no jnana ?"

PRASANNA : "What sort of jnana are you talking about ? Jnana means Knowledge. Knowledge of what ? Certainly of God. But I am not even sure of the existence of God."

TARAK : "Yes, that's true. According to the jnani, there is no God."

M. (to himself) : "Ah ! The Master used to say that those who seek God pass through the state that Prasanna is now experiencing. In that state sometimes one doubts the very existence of God. I understand that Tarak is now reading Buddhistic philosophy. That is why he says that according to the jnani God does not exist. But Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the jnani and the bhakta will ultimately arrive at the same destination."

Narendra and Prasanna were talking in the meditation room. Rakhal, Harish, and the younger Gopal were seated in another part of the room. After a while the elder Gopal came in.

Narendra was reading from the *Gita* and explaining the verses to Prasanna :

The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them, by his maya, to revolve as if mounted on a machine. Take refuge in Him with all thy heart, O Bharata. By His grace wilt thou attain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode. Relinquishing all dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate thee from all sins. Grieve not.

NARENDRA : "Did you notice what Krishna said ? 'Mounted on a machine.' The Lord, by His maya, causes all beings to revolve as if mounted on a machine. To seek to know God ? You are but a worm among worms—and you to know God ? Just reflect a moment : what is man ? It is said that each one of the myriads of stars that shine overhead represents a solar system. This earth of ours is a part of only one solar system, and even that is too big for us. Like an insect man walks about on this earth, which, compared to the sun, is only a tiny ball."

Narendra sang :

We are born, O Lord, in the dust of earth,
And our eyes are blinded by the dust ;
With dust we toy like children at play :
O give us assurance, Thou Help of the weak !

Wilt Thou cast us out of Thy lap, O Lord,
For a single mistake ? Wilt Thou turn away
And abandon us to our helplessness ?
Oh, then we shall never be able to rise,
But shall lie for ever dazed and undone,



Mere babes are we, Father, with baby minds ;
 At every step we stumble and fall.
 Why, then, must Thou show us Thy terrible face ?
 Why, Lord, must we ever behold Thy frown ?

Small are we—oh, do not be angry with us,
 But tenderly speak to us when we do wrong ;
 For though Thou dost raise us a hundred times,
 A hundred times we shall fall again !
 What else can one do with a helpless mind ?

Then he said to Prasanna : "Surrender yourself at His feet. Resign yourself completely to His will."

Narendra sang again in an ecstatic mood :

O Lord, I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant ! Thy servant am I !
 O Lord, Thou art my Master, Thou art my Master ! My Master art Thou !
 From Thee I have received two pieces of bread and a kaupin ;¹¹
 When I sing Thy name, devotion wells up in my heart and shields me from harm.
 Thou art the Master, the All-compassionate ; this I repeat, O Lord !
 Thy servant Kabir has taken refuge at Thy feet.

Narendra said to Prasanna : "Don't you remember Sri Ramakrishna's words ? God is the hill of sugar and you are but an ant. One grain is enough to fill your stomach, and you think of bringing home the entire hill ! Don't you remember what the master said about Sukadeva ? Even Sukadeva was a big ant at the most. That is why I scolded Kali, saying : 'You fool ! Do you want to measure God with your tape and foot-rule ?'

"God is the Ocean of Mercy. Be His slave and take refuge in Him. He will show compassion. Pray to Him : 'Protect me always with Thy compassionate face. Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality. Reveal Thyself to me and protect me always with Thy compassionate face.'"

PRASANNA : "What kind of spiritual discipline should one practise ?"

NARENDRA : "Repeat His name. That's enough. Don't you remember Sri Ramakrishna's song ?"

Narendra sang :

O Syama, my only hope is in Thy hallowed name !
 What need have I of kosa and kusi ?¹² What need of smiles and conventions ?
 Thy name dissolves death's bonds, as Siva has proclaimed,
 And I myself am Siva's servant ; whom else should I obey ?
 O Mother, come what may, I shall repeat Thy name ;
 Why should I fret myself to death ? To Siva's words I cling.

¹¹ Loin-cloth of a monk.

¹² Metal articles used in the temple worship.

He sang again :

Mere babes are we, Father, with baby minds ;
At every step we stumble and fall.
Why, then, must Thou show us Thy terrible face ?
Why, Lord, must we ever behold Thy frown ?

PRASANNA : " Now you are saying that there is a God. Again, it is you who say that according to Charvaka and many other thinkers the world was self-created."

NARENDRA : " Haven't you studied chemistry ? Who combines the different elements ? It is a human hand that combines hydrogen, oxygen, and electricity to prepare water. Everybody admits the existence of an Intelligent Force—a Force that is the essence of Knowledge and that guides all these phenomena."

PRASANNA : " How are we to know that God is kind ? "

NARENDRA : " The Vedas say, ' That which is Thy compassionate face.' John Stuart Mill said the same thing. He said, ' How much kindness must He have, who has implanted kindness in the hearts of men.' The Master used to say : ' Faith is the one essential thing. God exists. He is very near us. Through faith alone one sees Him.' "

Narendra sang :

Where are you seeking Me, My servant ? I am very close to you.
Far away you still are seeking, though I am so very near.
I am not in skin or hair, I am not in bones or flesh,
Not in mosque and not in temple, not in Kasi or Kailas.
Never will you come on Me in Ayodhya or Dwaraka ;
But you will be sure to find Me if you search where faith abides.
Not in pleasant tasks or yoga, not in vairagya or sannyas,
Yet I come without delaying if you only search for Me.

PRASANNA : " Sometimes you say that God does not exist, and now you are saying all these things ! You are not consistent. You keep changing your opinions."

All laughed.

NARENDRA : " All right ! I shall never change what I have just said. As long as one has desires and cravings, so long one doubts the existence of God. A man cherishes some desire or other. Perhaps he has the desire to study or pass the university examination or become a scholar, and so forth and so on."

Narendra sang again, in a voice choked with emotion :

Hail to Thee, our God and Lord ! Hail, Giver of every blessing !
Hail, Thou Giver of good !
O Redeemer from fear, from danger and suffering !
Upholder of the worlds !
Hail, Lord ! Victory to Thee !

Unfathomable and infinite, immeasurable, beyond compare,
O God, none equals Thee !
Lord of the Universe ! O All-pervading Truth !

Thou the Atman Supreme !
Hail, Lord ! Victory to Thee !

O Thou, the All-compassionate One, adored by the whole, universe,
I bow before Thy feet !
Thou art the only Refuge in life and death, O Lord ;
Before Thy feet I bow !
Hail, Lord ! Victory to Thee !

This is our only prayer, O Lord ! What other boon can we implore ?
Thus do we pray to Thee :
Grant us true wisdom here, and in the life hereafter
Reveal Thyself to us.
Hail, Lord ! Victory to Thee !

Again Narendra sang, describing how very near God is to us—as near as the musk to the deer—and exhorting his brother disciples to drink deep from the cup of Divine Bliss :

Drinking the Bliss of Hari from the cup of prema,
Sadhu, be intoxicated !
Childhood you spent in crying, and youth in women's control ;
Now, in your old age, full of phlegm and wind,
You wait for the funeral couch to bear you to the cremation ground.

Within the musk-deer's navel the fragrant musk is found ;
But how can you make it understand ?
Without the proper teacher to guide him on his way,
Man, too, is blindly roaming through the world,
Deluded as the foolish deer that wanders round and round the woods.

M. heard all this from the verandah.

Narendra got up. As he left the room he remarked, " My brain is heated by talking to these youngsters."

He met M. on the verandah and said, " Please, let us have a drink of water."

One of the members of the math said to Narendra, " Why, then, do you say that God does not exist ?"

Narendra laughed.

Monday, May 9, 1887

The next morning M. was sitting alone under a tree in the garden. He said to himself : " Sri Ramakrishna has made the brothers of the monastery renounce ' woman and gold '. Ah, how eager they are to realize God ! This place has become a veritable Vaikuntha, and the brothers living here are embodiments of Narayana. It is not many days since the Master passed away ; that is why all the ideas and ideals he stood for are there, almost intact. ' The same Ayodhya—only Rama is not there.' The Master has made these brothers renounce their homes. Why has he kept a few in the world ? Is there no way of liberation for them ?"

From a room upstairs Narendra saw M. sitting alone under the tree. He came down and said with a smile, "Hello, M. ! What are you doing ?"

After a little conversation M. said to him : "Ah, you have such a sweet voice. Please sing a hymn"

Narendra sang the following hymn to Siva, in which the devotee prays for forgiveness for his sins :

Even before I saw the light of this world, my sins from previous births,

Through which I passed because of desire for the fruit of my deeds,
Punished me as I lay in my mother's womb.

There I was boiled in the midst of filthy things :

Who can describe the pain that afflicts the child in its mother's womb ?

Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

In childhood my suffering never came to an end ;

My body was covered with filth and I craved for my mother's breasts.

Over my body and limbs I had no control ;

I was pursued by troublesome flies and mosquitoes ;

Day and night I cried with the pain of many an ailment, forgetting
Thee, O Sankara !

Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

In youth the venomous snakes of sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell,
Bit into my vitals and slew my discrimination ;

I was engrossed in the pleasures of wealth, sons, and a youthful wife.

Alas ! my heart, bereft of the thought of Siva,

Was filled with arrogance and pride.

Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

Now in old age my senses have lost the power of proper judging
and acting ;

My body, though still not wholly bereft of life,

Is weak and senile from many afflictions, from sins and illnesses and
bereavements ;

But even now my mind, instead of meditating on Siva,

Runs after vain desires and hollow delusions.

Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

The duties laid down in the smṛiti—perilous and abstruse—are now
beyond me ;

How can I speak of the Vedic injunctions for brahmins, as means for
attaining Brahman ?

Never yet have I rightly grasped, through discrimination,

The meaning of hearing the scriptures from the guru and reasoning
on his instruction ;

How then can I speak of reflecting on Truth without interruption ?

Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions,

Not even once have I finished my bath before sunrise and brought
from the Ganges
Water to bathe Thy holy image ;
Never, from the deep woods, have I brought the sacred bel-leaves
for Thy worship ;
Nor have I gathered full-blown lotuses from the lakes,
Nor ever arranged the lights and the incense for worshipping Thee.
Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

I have not bathed Thine image with milk and honey, with butter and
other oblations ;
I have not decked it with fragrant sandal-paste ;
I have not worshipped Thee with golden flowers, with incense, with
camphor-flame and savoury offerings.
Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

I have not made rich gifts to the brahmins, cherishing in my heart,
O Mahadeva, Thy sacred form ;
I have not made in the sacred fire the million oblations of butter,
Repeating the holy mantra given to me by my guru ;
Never have I done penance along the Ganges with japa and study of
the Vedas.
Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

I have not sat in the lotus posture, nor have I ever controlled
The prana along the Sushumna, repeating the syllable Om ;
Never have I suppressed the turbulent waves of my mind, nor merged
the self-effulgent Om
In the ever shining Witness-Consciousness, whose nature is that of the
highest Brahman ;
Nor have I, in samadhi, meditated on Sankara, who dwells in every
form as the Inner Guide.
Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

Never, O Siva ! have I seen Thee, the Pure, the Unattached, the
Naked One,
Beyond the three gunas, free from delusion and darkness, absorbed
in meditation,
And ever aware of the true nature of the world ;
Nor, with a longing heart, have I meditated on Thine auspicious and
sin-destroying form.
Therefore, O Siva ! O Mahadeva ! O Sambhu ! forgive me, I pray,
for my transgressions.

O mind, to gain liberation, concentrate wholly on Siva,
The sole Reality underlying the worlds, the Giver of good ;
Whose head is illumined by the crescent moon and in whose hair the
Ganges is hidden ;
Whose fire-darting eyes consumed the god of earthly love ; whose
throat and ears are decked with snakes ;
Whose upper garment is a comely elephant-skin.
Of what avail are all the other rituals ?

O mind, of what avail are wealth or horses, elephants or a kingdom ?
Of what avail the body or a house ?
Know all these to be but momentary and quickly shun them ;
Worship Siva, as your guru instructs you, for the attaining of Self-
Knowledge.

Day by day does man come nearer to death ;
His youth wears away ; the day that is gone never returns.
Almighty Time devours everything ;
Fickle as lightning is the goddess of fortune.
O Siva ! O Giver of shelter to those that come to Thee for refuge !
Protect me, who have taken refuge at Thy feet.

I salute the ever auspicious Siva, the Home of Peace,
Who sits in the lotus posture ; who has five mouths and three eyes ;
Who holds in both His hands weapons and gong and drum ;
Who is bedecked with many an ornament ;
Whose skin is clear as crystal ; who is Parvati's Lord.

I salute the self-effulgent Guru of the gods, the Lord of Uma ;
I salute the Cause of the Universe ;
I salute the Lord of beasts, adorned with snakes ;
I salute Siva, whose three eyes shine like the sun, the moon, and fire ;
I salute the Beloved of Krishna ; I salute Sankara, who bestows boons
on His devotees and gives them shelter ;
I salute the auspicious Siva.

O Siva ! White is Thy body, covered with ashes ; white shine Thy
teeth when Thou smilest !
White is the skull Thou holdest in Thy hand ; white is Thy club,
which threatens the wicked !
White is the bull on which Thou ridest ; white are the rings that hang
from Thine ears !
White appear Thy matted locks, covered with the foam of the Ganges ;
White shines the moon on Thy forehead !
May He who is all white, all pure, bestow on me the treasure of for-
giveness for my transgressions !

O Siva, forgive all the sins that I have committed
With hands or feet, with words or body, with ears or eyes, with mind
or heart ;
Forgive my sins, those past and those that are yet to come !
Victory unto Siva, the Ocean of Compassion, the Great God, the
Abode of Blessedness !

After the hymn Narendra and M. talked again.

NARENDRA : " You may speak of leading a detached life in the world,
and all that, but you will not attain anything unless you renounce ' woman and
gold '. Don't you feel disgusted with your wife's body ?

Fools enjoy the contact of the body, filled with filth, peopled with
worms, foul of smell by nature, made of flesh, blood, bone,
and marrow ; but the wise shun it.

" Vain is the life of a person who does not take delight in the teachings
of Vedanta and drink the Nectar of Divine Bliss. Listen to a song."

Narendra sang :

O man, abandon your delusion ! Cast aside your wicked counsels !
 Know the Lord and free yourself from earthly suffering !
 For a few days' pleasure only, you have quite forgotten Him
 Who is the Comrade of your soul. Alas, what mockery !

"No liberation is possible for a man unless he puts on the loin-cloth of a sannyasi. The world must be renounced."

Narendra sang from the Five Stanzas on the glory of the monk's loin-cloth :

Roaming ever in the grove of Vedanta,
 Ever pleased with his beggar's morsel
 Ever walking with heart free from sorrow,
 Blest indeed is the wearer of the loin-cloth. . . .

Continuing, Narendra said : "Why should a man be entangled in worldliness ? Why should he be ensnared by maya ? What is man's real nature ? He is the blessed Siva, the Embodiment of Bliss and Spirit."

He sang Sankaracharya's Six Stanzas on Nirvana :

Om. I am neither mind, intelligence, ego, nor chitta,
 Neither ears nor tongue nor the senses of smell and sight ;
 Nor am I ether, earth, fire, water, or air :
 I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva ! . . .

Narendra recited another hymn, the Eight Stanzas on the glory of Krishna :

I am consumed with false desires and wrapped in the sleep of lust :
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 Thou art my only Refuge, Lord ! I have no other salvation.
 I am entrapped in the mire of sin :
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

I am ensnared in the net of love for children, wife, and home :
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 I am without devotion, helpless, smitten by wrong desire,
 Afflicted with grief and misery :
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

Lord, I have neither master nor place of shelter to call my own :
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 Utterly wearied out am I by all this going and coming
 Along the endless road of life :
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

From this hard and unavailing journey through life and death,
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 Many the births that I have seen in many a bodily form,
 And painful it is in the mother's womb :
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

To Thee I come for salvation out of the cycle of existence :
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 For I am terrified alike of old age and of death :
 I come to Thee for shelter, Lord !
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !





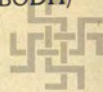
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA (KALI)



SWAMI ADVAITANANDA
(THE ELDER GOPAL)



SWAMI SUBODHANANDA (SUBODH)



Never a good deed have I done, but many have been my sins :
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 Headlong have I fallen into the mire of worldliness ;
 Countless the births I have endured :
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

I have lorded it over men, but happiness is not there :
 Save me, O Madhusudana !
 What my words have promised, my deeds have never carried out ;
 Lord, I am full of wretchedness :
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

If as a man or a woman I must be born again and again—
 Save me, O Madhusudana !—
 May my devotion be unswerving to Thy feet, O Lord !
 From the delusion of this world,
 O Madhusudana, redeem me !

M. remained spellbound as he listened to these hymns sung by Narendra. He said to himself : "How intense Narendra's dispassion is ! This is how he has infused the spirit of dispassion into the hearts of the other brothers of the monastery. The very contact with them awakens in the hearts of the Master's householder devotees the desire for renunciation of 'woman and gold'. Ah, how blessed are these all-renouncing brothers ! Why has the Master kept us few in the world ? Will he show us a way ? Will he give us the spirit of renunciation, or will he delude us with worldliness ?"

After the meal all were resting. The elder Gopal was copying some songs. Niranjana was on a visit to his mother. Sarat, Baburam, and Kali were in Puri.

Narendra, with one or two brothers, left for Calcutta. He had to see to his lawsuit. He was going to return in the evening ; the brothers could not bear his absence.

In the afternoon Rabindra arrived, looking like a mad person. He was barefoot and had only half of his black-bordered cloth round his waist. His eyeballs were rolling like a madman's. All asked him anxiously what was the matter.

"Let me recover my breath!" he said. "I shall tell you everything presently. I am certainly not going back home ; I shall stay at this very place with you all. She is certainly a traitor ! Let me tell you something, friends. For her sake I gave up my habit of drinking, which I had indulged for five years. I have not taken a drop for the last eight months. And she is a traitor !"

The brothers of the math said : "Be calm, please ! How did you come ?"

RABINDRA : "I have come barefoot all the way from Calcutta."

The brothers asked him where he had lost the other half of his cloth.

RABINDRA : "When I was leaving her place she began to pull at my cloth. That is how half of it was torn off."

The brothers told him to bathe in the Ganges and cool off ; then they would hear his story.

Rabindra belonged to a respectable kayastha family of Calcutta. He was twenty or twenty-two years old. He had first met Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar temple and had received his special blessing. On one occasion he had spent three nights with the Master. His disposition was very sweet and tender, and the Master had loved him dearly. Once he had said to Rabindra : " You will have to wait some time ; you have to go through a few more experiences. Nothing can be done now. You see, the police can't do much just when the robbers attack a house. When the plundering is almost over, the police make their arrest."

Rabindra had many virtues. He was devoted to God and to service of the poor. He had many spiritual qualities. But he had walked into the snare of a prostitute. Now, suddenly, he had discovered that the woman was being unfaithful to him. Therefore he had come to the math in this dishevelled state, resolved not to go back to the world.

A devotee accompanied Rabindra to the Ganges. It was his inmost desire that Rabindra's spiritual consciousness should be awakened in the company of these holy men. When Rabindra finished his bath, the devotee took him to the adjacent cremation ground, showed him the corpses lying about, and said : " The brothers of the math come here every now and then to meditate on God. It is a good place for meditation. Here one sees clearly that the world is impermanent."

Rabindra sat down in the cremation ground to meditate. But he could not meditate long ; his mind was restless.

Rabindra and the devotee returned to the math. They went to the worship room to salute the Deity. The devotee said to him, " The brothers of the math meditate in this room."

Rabindra sat there to meditate, but could not meditate long there either.

DEVOTEE : " How do you feel ? Is your mind very restless ? Is that why you have got up from your seat ? Perhaps you could not concentrate well."

RABINDRA : " I am sure I shall not go back to the world. But the mind is restless."

M. and Rabindra were talking. No one else was present. M. was telling him stories from the life of Buddha. At that time the members of the math regularly read the lives of Buddha and Chaitanya. M. said to Rabindra that Buddha's spiritual consciousness was first awakened by hearing a song of some heavenly maidens.

M. sang the song :

We moan for rest, alas ! but rest can never find ;
We know not whence we come, nor where we float away.
Time and again we tread this round of smiles and tears ;
In vain we pine to know whither our pathway leads,
And why we play this empty play. . . .

That night Narendra, Tarak, and Harish returned from Calcutta. They said, " Oh, what a big meal we had ! " They had been entertained by a devotee in Calcutta.

The members of the monastery assembled in the room of the "danas". Narendra heard Rabindra's story. He sang by way of giving instruction to him :

O man, abandon your delusion ! Cast aside your wicked counsels !
Know the Lord and free yourself from earthly suffering !
For a few days' pleasure only, you have quite forgotten Him
Who is the Comrade of your soul. Alas, what mockery !

Narendra sang again :

Drinking the Bliss of Hari from the cup of prema,
Sadhu, be intoxicated ! . . .

A few minutes later the brothers went to Kali Tapasvi's room. Girish Ghosh had just sent two of his new books to the monastery : the *Life of Buddha* and the *Life of Chaitanya*.

Since the founding of the new math Sashi had devoted himself heart and soul to the worship and service of the Master. All were amazed at his devotion. Just as he had tended Sri Ramakrishna's physical body during his illness, so now, with the same unswerving zeal, he worshipped the Master in the shrine room.

A member of the monastery was reading aloud from the lives of Buddha and Chaitanya. He was a little sarcastic while reading Chaitanya's life. Narendra snatched the book from his hand and said, "That is how you spoil a good thing !"

Narendra read the chapter describing how Chaitanya gave his love to all, from the brahmin to the pariah.

A BROTHER : "I say that one person cannot give love to another person."

NARENDRA : "But the Master gave it to me."

BROTHER : "Well, are you sure you have it ?"

NARENDRA : "What can you understand about love ? You belong to the servant class. All of you must serve me and massage my feet. Don't flatter yourselves by thinking you have understood everything. Now go and prepare a smoke for me."

All laughed.

THE BROTHER : "I surely will not."

M. (to himself) : "Sri Ramakrishna has transmitted mettle to all the brothers of the math. It is no monopoly of Narendra's. Is it possible to renounce 'woman and gold' without this inner fire ?"

May 10, 1887

It was Tuesday, a very auspicious day for the worship of the Divine Mother. Arrangements were being made for Her special worship at the monastery.

M. was going to the Ganges to take his bath. Rabindra was walking alone on the roof. He heard Narendra singing the Six Stanzas on Nirvana :

Death or fear I have none, nor any distinction of caste ;
Neither father nor mother nor even a birth have I ;
Neither friend nor comrade, neither disciple nor guru :
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !



I have no form or fancy ; the All-pervading am I ;
Everywhere I exist, yet I am beyond the senses ;
Neither salvation am I, nor anything that may be known ;
I am Pure Knowledge and Bliss : I am Siva ! I am Siva !

Rabindra went to the Ganges to take his bath. Presently he returned to the monastery clad in his wet cloth.

Narendra said to M. in a whisper : " He has bathed in the Ganges. It would be good to initiate him now into sannyas."

Both Narendra and M. smiled.

Prasanna asked Rabindra to change his wet cloth and gave him a dry gerrua cloth. Narendra said to M., " Now he is going to put on the cloth of renunciation."

M. (*with a smile*) : " What kind of renunciation ? "

NARENDRA : " Why, the renunciation of ' woman and gold '."

Rabindra put on the ochre cloth and entered Kali Tapasvi's room to meditate.



Appendix A

WITH KESHAB AT DAKSHINESWAR

Saturday, January 1, 1881

KESHAB CHANDRA SEN, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, was expected to visit Sri Ramakrishna at the temple garden at Dakshineswar. With the Master were many Brahmo celebrities—Pratap, Trailokya, Jaygopal, and others. It was only a few days before the annual festival of the Brahmo Samaj, and the Brahmos were eagerly awaiting the arrival of their leader, who was to come by steamer. They were restless and talking rather noisily. Ram, Manomohan, and several other devotees of the Master were also there.

At last Keshab entered the Master's room with two fruits and a bouquet of flowers in his hands. Touching the Master's feet, he laid the offering at his side. Then he saluted Sri Ramakrishna with great reverence, bowing very low before him. Sri Ramakrishna returned in like manner his distinguished visitor's salutation. Then he laughingly began the conversation.

MASTER : "You, Keshab, want me ; but your disciples don't. I was saying to them : 'Let us be restless. Then Govinda will come.' (*To Keshab's disciples*) See, here is your Govinda !

"We have been showing signs of restlessness all this while to set the stage for your arrival. It isn't easy to have the vision of Govinda. You must have noticed in the Krishnayatra¹ that Narada enters Vrīndavan and prays with great yearning : 'O Govinda ! O my soul ! O Life of my life !', and then Krishna comes on the stage with the cowherd boys, followed by the gopis. No one can see God without that yearning.

"Well, Keshab, say something ! They are eager to hear your words."

KESHAB (*humbly, with a smile*) : "To open my lips here would be like trying to 'sell needles to a blacksmith'."

MASTER (*smiling*) : "But don't you know that the nature of devotees is like that of hemp-smokers ? One hemp-smoker says to another, 'Please take a puff for yourself and give me one.'" (*All laugh.*)

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. They heard the music from the nahabat in the temple garden.

¹ A theatrical performance depicting the life of Krishna.

MASTER (*to Keshab and the others*): "Do you hear how melodious that music is? One player is producing only a monotone on his flute, while another is creating waves of melodies in different ragas and raginis.² That is my attitude. Why should I produce only a monotone when I have an instrument with seven holes? Why should I say nothing but, 'I am He, I am He'? I want to play various melodies on my instrument with seven holes. Why should I say only, 'Brahma! Brahma!'? I want to call on God through all the moods—through *santa*, *dasya*, *sakhya*, *vatsalya*, and *madhur*. I want to make merry with God. I want to sport with God."

Keshab listened to these words with wonder in his eyes and said to the Brahmo devotees, "I have never before heard such a wonderful and beautiful interpretation of *jnana* and *bhakti*."

KESHAB (*to the Master*): "How long will you hide yourself in this way? I dare say people will be thronging here by and by in great crowds."

MASTER: "What are you talking of? I only eat and drink and sing God's name. I know nothing about gathering crowds. Hanuman once declared: 'I know nothing about the day of the week or the position of the moon and stars in the sky. I simply meditate on Rama.'"

KESHAB: "All right, sir, I shall gather the crowd. But they all must come to your place."

MASTER: "I am the dust of the dust of everybody's feet. If anyone is gracious enough to come here, he is welcome."

KESHAB: "Whatever you may say, sir, your advent cannot be in vain."

In the mean time the devotees had arranged a *kirtan*. Many of them had joined it. The party started at the *Panchavati* and moved toward the Master's room. Hriday blew the horn, Gopidas played the drum, and two devotees played the cymbals.

Sri Ramakrishna sang:

O man, if you would live in bliss, repeat Lord Hari's name :
Then you will lead a life of joy and go to paradise,
And feed upon the fruit of *moksha* evermore :
Such is the glory of His name !
I give you the name of Hari, which Siva, God of Gods,
Repeats aloud with His five mouths.

The Master danced with the strength of a lion and went into *samadhi*. Regaining consciousness of the outer world, he sat down in his room and began to talk with Keshab and the other devotees.

MASTER: "God can be realized through all paths. It is like your coming to Dakshineswar by carriage, by boat, by steamer, or on foot. You have chosen the way according to your convenience and taste; but the destination is the same. Some of you have arrived earlier than others; but all have arrived.

"The more you rid yourself of *upadhis*, the nearer you will feel the presence of God. Rain-water never collects on a high mound; it collects only in low

² Modes in Indian music.

land. Similarly, the water of God's grace cannot remain on the high mound of egotism. Before God one should feel lowly and poor.

"One should be extremely watchful. Even clothes create vanity. I notice that even a man suffering from an enlarged spleen sings Nidhu Babu's light songs when he is dressed up in a black-bordered cloth. There are men who spout English whenever they put on high boots. And when an unfit person puts on an ochre cloth he becomes vain ; the slightest sign of indifference to him arouses his anger and pique.

"God cannot be seen without yearning of heart, and this yearning is impossible unless one has finished with the experiences of life. Those who live surrounded by 'woman and gold', and have not yet come to the end of their experiences, do not yearn for God.

"When I lived at Kamarpukur, Hriday's son, a child four or five years old, used to spend the whole day with me. He played with his toys and almost forgot everything else. But no sooner did evening come than he would say, 'I want to go to my mother.' I would try to cajole him in various ways and would say, 'Here, I'll give you a pigeon.' But he wouldn't be consoled with such things ; he would weep and cry, 'I want to go to my mother.' He didn't enjoy playing any more. I myself wept to see his state.

"One should cry for God that way, like a child. That is what it means to be restless for God. One doesn't enjoy play or food any longer. After one's experiences of the world are over, one feels this restlessness and weeps for God."

The devotees sat in silence, listening to the Master's words. When evening came, a lamp was lighted in the room. Preparations were being made for feeding Keshab and the devotees.

KESHAB (*with a smile*) : "What ? Puffed rice again today ?"

MASTER (*smiling*) : "Hriday knows."

The devotees were served first with puffed rice, and then with luchi and curries on leaf-plates. All enjoyed the meal very much. It was about ten o'clock when supper was over.

The Master went to the Panchavati with Keshab and the devotees.

MASTER (*to Keshab and the others*) : "One can very well live in the world after realizing God. Why don't you first touch the 'granny' and then play hide-and-seek ?

"After attaining God, a devotee becomes unattached to the world. He lives like a mudfish. The mudfish keeps its body unstained though it lives in mud."

About eleven o'clock the Brahmos became eager to go home. Pratap said, "It would be nice if we could spend the night here."

MASTER (*to Keshab*) : "Why not stay here tonight ?"

KESHAB (*smiling*) : "No, I have business to attend to. I must go."

MASTER : "Why must you, my dear sir ? Can't you sleep without your fish-basket ? Once a fishwife was a guest in a gardener's house. She was asked to sleep in a room full of flowers. But she couldn't get any sleep there. (*All laugh.*) She was restless and began to fidget about. The gardener called to her : 'Hello there ! Why aren't you asleep ?' 'Oh, I don't know', said the

fishwife. 'There are flowers here. The smell keeps me awake. Can't you bring me my fish-basket?' She sprinkled a little water in the basket, and when she smelled the fish she fell fast asleep." (*All laugh heartily.*)

Keshab took a few of the flowers that he had offered at Sri Ramakrishna's feet on his arrival. He and his Brahmo devotees cried out as they saluted the Master, "Hail, Navavidhan!" Thus they bade him adieu.

One day during the rainy season of 1881 Sri Ramakrishna and a number of devotees visited Surendra's house. It was about dusk.

The Master entered the drawing-room on the second floor, where several of Surendra's neighbours had already gathered. Keshab had also been invited but could not come. Trailokya and a few Brahmo devotees were present. A mat covered with a white sheet was spread on the floor, and on it had been placed a beautiful carpet with a cushion. Surendra requested the Master to sit on the carpet; but Sri Ramakrishna would not listen to him and sat on the mat next to Mahendra Goswami, one of Surendra's neighbours.

MAHENDRA (*to the devotees*): "For several months I spent most of my time with him [meaning Sri Ramakrishna]. I have never before seen such a great man. His spiritual moods are not of the ordinary kind."

MASTER (*to Mahendra*): "How dare you say that? I am the most insignificant of the insignificant, the lowliest of the lowly. I am the servant of the servants of God. Krishna alone is great."

"Krishna is none other than Satchidananda, the Indivisible Brahman. The water of the ocean looks blue from a distance. Go near it and you will find it colourless. He who is endowed with attributes is also without attributes. The Absolute and the Relative belong to the same Reality."

"Why is Krishna tribhanga, bent in three places? Because of His love for Radha."

"That which is Brahman is also Kali, the Adyasakti, who creates, preserves, and destroys the universe. He who is Krishna is the same as Kali. The root is one—all these are His sport and play."

"God can be seen. He can be seen through the pure mind and the pure intelligence. Through attachment to 'woman and gold' the mind becomes impure."

"The mind is everything. It is like a white cloth just returned from the laundry. It will take any colour you dye it with. Knowledge is of the mind, and ignorance is also of the mind. When you say that a certain person has become impure, you mean that impurity has coloured his mind."

Surendra approached the Master with a garland and wanted to put it around his neck. But the Master took it in his hand and threw it aside. Surendra's pride was wounded and his eyes filled with tears. He went to the west porch and sat with Ram, Manomohan, and the others. In a voice choked with sadness he said: "I am really angry. How can a poor brahmin know the value of a thing like that? I spent a lot of money for that garland, and he refused to accept it. I was unable to control my anger and said that the other garlands were to be given away to the devotees. Now I realize it was all my

fault. God cannot be bought with money ; He cannot be possessed by a vain person. I have really been vain. Why should he accept my worship ? I don't feel like living any more." Tears streamed down his cheeks and over his chest.

In the mean time Trailokya was singing inside the room. The Master began to dance in an ecstasy of joy. He put around his neck the garland that he had thrown aside ; holding it with one hand, he swung it with the other as he danced and sang. Now Surendra's joy was unbounded. The Master had accepted his offering. Surendra said to himself, "God crushes one's pride, no doubt, but He is also the cherished treasure of the humble and lowly."

The Master now sang :

Behold, the two brothers have come, who weep while chanting Hari's
name,
The brothers who, in return for blows, offer to sinners Hari's love !
Behold them, drunk with Hari's love, who make the world drunk
as well,
Embracing everyone as brother, even the outcaste shunned by men.
Behold, the two brothers have come, who once were Kanai and Balai
of Braja. . . .

Many of the devotees danced while Sri Ramakrishna sang this song.

When the kirtan was over, everyone sat around the Master and became engaged in pleasant conversation. Sri Ramakrishna said to Surendra, "Won't you give me something to eat ?" Then he went into the inner apartments, where the ladies saluted him. After the meal Sri Ramakrishna left for Dakshineswar.

Saturday, December 3, 1881

In the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna paid a visit to his householder disciple Manomohan, at 23 Simla Street, Calcutta. It was a small two-storey house with a courtyard. The Master was seated in the drawing-room on the first floor. Ishan of Bhawanipur asked him : "Sir, why have you renounced the world ? The scriptures extol the householder's life as the best."

MASTER : "I don't know much about what is good and what is bad. I do what God makes me do and speak what He makes me speak."

ISHAN : "If everybody renounced the world, they would be acting against God's will."

MASTER : "Why should everybody renounce ? On the other hand, can it be the will of God that all should revel in 'woman and gold' like dogs and jackals ? Has He no other wish ? Do you know what accords with His will and what is against it ?

"You say that God wants everybody to lead a worldly life. But why don't you see it as God's will when your wife and children die ? Why don't you see His will in poverty, when you haven't a morsel to eat ?

"Maya won't allow us to know the will of God. On account of God's maya the unreal appears as real, and the real as unreal. The world is unreal. This moment it exists and the next it disappears. But on account of His maya it seems to be real. It is only through His maya that the ego seems to be the

doer. Furthermore, on account of this maya a man regards his wife and children, his brother and sister, his father and mother, his house and property, as his very own.

"There are two aspects of maya : vidya and avidya. Avidya deludes one with worldliness, and vidya—wisdom, devotion, and the company of holy men—leads one to God.

"He who has gone beyond maya, through the grace of God, views alike both vidya and avidya. Worldly life is a life of enjoyment. After all, what is there to enjoy in 'woman and gold'? As soon as a sweetmeat has gone down the throat, one doesn't remember whether it tasted sweet or sour.

"But why should everybody renounce? Is renunciation possible except in the fullness of time? The time for renunciation comes when one reaches the limit of enjoyment. Can anybody force himself into renunciation? There is a kind of renunciation known as 'monkey renunciation'. Only small-minded people cultivate it. Take the case of a fatherless boy. His poor widowed mother earns her livelihood by spinning. The boy loses his insignificant job and suddenly is seized with a fit of renunciation. He puts on the ochre cloth of a monk and goes to Benares. A few days later he writes home, 'I have secured a job for ten rupees a month.' In the mean time he tries to buy a gold ring and beautiful clothes. How can he stifle his desire for enjoyment?"

Keshab arrived with some Brahmo devotees and respectfully saluted the Master. He took a seat on Sri Ramakrishna's left, Ram on his right. For some time a reader recited from the *Bhagavata* and explained the text.

MASTER (to the devotees): "It is very difficult to do one's duty in the world. If you whirl round too fast you feel giddy and faint; but there is no such fear if you hold on to a post. Do your duty, but do not forget God.

"You may ask, 'If worldly life is so difficult, then what is the way?' The way is constant practice. At Kamarpukur I have seen the women of the carpenter families flattening rice with a husking-machine. They are always fearful of the pestle's smashing their fingers; and at the same time they go on nursing their children and bargaining with customers. They say to the customers, 'Pay us what you owe before you leave.'

"An immoral woman goes on performing her household duties, but all the time her mind dwells on her sweetheart.

"But one needs spiritual discipline to acquire such a state of mind; one should pray to God in solitude every now and then. It is possible to perform worldly duties after obtaining love for God. If you try to break a jack-fruit, your hands will be smeared with its sticky juice. But that won't happen if, beforehand, you rub them with oil."

The kirtan began. Trailokya was singing. The Master danced, Keshab and the other devotees dancing with him. Though it was winter the Master became hot and perspired. After the music he wanted something to eat. A plate of sweetmeats was sent from the inner apartments. Keshab held the plate before Sri Ramakrishna and the Master ate. When he had finished, Keshab poured water on his hands and then dried the Master's hands and face with a towel. Afterwards he began to fan the Master.

MASTER (*to Keshab and the other devotees*): "They are heroes indeed who can pray to God in the midst of their worldly activities. They are like men who strive for God-realization while carrying heavy loads on their heads. Such men are real heroes. You may say that this is extremely difficult. But is there anything, however hard, that cannot be achieved through God's grace? His grace makes even the impossible possible. If a lamp is brought into a room that has been dark a thousand years, does it illumine the room little by little? The room is lighted all at once."

These reassuring words gladdened the hearts of Keshab and the other householder devotees.

KESHAB (*to Rajendra Mitra, the uncle of Ram and Manomohan*): "Wouldn't it be nice if you could arrange a festival like this at your house one day?"

RAJENDRA: "Very good, I will. Well, Ram, you'll have to take charge of everything."

Sri Ramakrishna was asked to go to the inner apartments, where Manomohan's mother had prepared his meal. A glass of ice-water, of which the Master was very fond, was placed near his plate.

Keshab and the other devotees sat in the courtyard and were treated to a sumptuous feast. The Master joined them and watched them eat. He danced and sang to entertain the guests.

When it was time for Sri Ramakrishna to leave for Dakshineswar, Keshab and the other devotees took the dust of his feet and saw him off in a hired carriage.

Saturday, December 10, 1881

At Keshab's request Rajendra Mitra arranged a religious festival at his home in Calcutta and invited Sri Ramakrishna and the devotees, including the members of the Brahmo Samaj.

Two days before, Aghorenath, a prominent member of the Brahmo Samaj, had suddenly passed away in Lucknow. Keshab and the other Brahmo devotees were in mourning, and Rajendra thought they could not possibly join in the festival at his house. This worried him. But Ram, the Master's devotee, said to him: "Why are you so sad? If Keshab can't come, let him stay away. Our Master will be here. He is always in communion with God. He enables one to see God. And his presence will make the festival a success."

Rajendra, accompanied by Ram and a few others, paid Keshab a visit to express their condolence for the death of Aghorenath. Keshab said to Rajendra: "Why, I haven't said I shall not join in the festival at your house. Sri Ramakrishna will be there; so how can I stay away? I am in mourning, it is true, but I shall come."

On the wall in Keshab's room hung a picture of Sri Ramakrishna absorbed in samadhi.

RAJENDRA (*to Keshab*): "Many people say that he (*pointing to the picture*) is an incarnation of Chaitanya."

KESHAB (*looking at the picture*): "One doesn't see such samadhi. Only men like Christ, Mohammed, and Chaitanya experienced it."

About three o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna arrived at Manomohan's house. He rested there awhile and had some refreshments. Surendra took the Master in a carriage to the studio of the Bengal Photographer. The art of photography was explained to him, and he was shown how glass covered with silver nitrate takes the image. As the Master was being photographed he went into samadhi.

A little later Sri Ramakrishna arrived at Rajendra Mitra's house. Keshab had not yet come, and Mahendra Goswami was reading from the *Bhagavata*. The Master conversed with the devotees.

MASTER : "Why shouldn't one be able to lead a spiritual life in the world? But it is extremely difficult. While coming here I passed over the bridge at Baghbazar. How many chains it is tied with! Nothing will happen if one chain is broken, for there are so many others to keep it in place. Just so, there are many ties on a worldly man. There is no way for him to get rid of them except through the grace of God.

"One need not be afraid of the world after one has had the vision of God. Both vidya and avidya exist in His maya; but one becomes indifferent to them after realizing God. One understands it rightly after attaining the state of a paramahansa. Only a swan can discard the water and drink the milk from a mixture of milk and water. A robin cannot do so."

A DEVOTEE : "Then what is the way for a householder?"

MASTER : "Faith in the guru's words. You should depend on his instruction. Do your duties in the world, holding fast to his words, like a person whirling round and holding fast to a pillar.

"One must not look on one's guru as a mere human being; it is Satchidananda Himself who appears as the guru. When the disciple has the vision of the Ishta, through the guru's grace, he finds the guru merging in Him.

"What can one not achieve through simple faith! Once there was an annaprasana ceremony³ in a guru's house. His disciples volunteered, according to their powers, to supply the different articles of food. He had one disciple, a very poor widow, who owned a cow. She milked it and brought the guru a jar of milk. He had thought she would take charge of all the milk and curd for the festival. Angry at her poor offering, he threw the milk away and said to her, 'Go and drown yourself.' The widow accepted this as his command and went to the river to drown herself. But God was pleased with her guileless faith and, appearing before her, said: 'Take this pot of curd. You will never be able to empty it. The more curd you pour out, the more will come from the pot. This will satisfy your teacher.' The guru was speechless with amazement when the pot was given to him. After hearing from the widow the story of the pot, he went to the river, saying to her, 'I shall drown myself if you cannot show God to me.' God appeared then and there, but the guru could not see Him. Addressing God, the widow said, 'If my teacher gives up his body because Thou dost not reveal Thyself to him, then I too shall die.' So God appeared to the guru—but only once.

³ A Hindu religious ceremony in connexion with the first offering of boiled rice to a baby.

"Now you see, because of faith in her guru the disciple herself had the vision of God and also showed Him to her teacher. Therefore I say, 'Even though my guru frequents a grog-shop, still to me he is the embodiment of Eternal Bliss.'

"All want to be the guru, but very few indeed want to be the disciple. But you know that rain-water doesn't collect on a high mound ; it collects in low land, in a hollow.

"One should have faith in the holy name given by the guru and with it practise spiritual discipline. It is said that the pearl oyster makes itself ready for the rain that falls when the star Svati is in the ascendant. Taking a drop of that rain, it dives into the fathomless depths of the ocean and remains there until the pearl is formed."

At the sight of the many Brahmo devotees assembled there, the Master said : "Is the meeting of the Brahmos a real devotional gathering or a mere show ? It is very good that the Brahmo Samaj holds regular devotions. But one must dive deep ; mere ceremonial worship or lectures are of no avail. One should pray to God that one's attachment to worldly enjoyment may disappear ; that one may have pure love for His Lotus Feet.

"The elephant has outer tusks and inner grinders as well. The tusks are mere ornaments ; but the elephant chews its food with the grinders. The inner enjoyment of 'woman and gold' injures the growth of one's devotion.

"What will you achieve through mere public lectures ? The vulture undoubtedly soars high, but its eyes are fixed on the charnel-pit. The rocket undoubtedly shoots up into the sky, but the next moment it falls to the ground.

"He who has renounced his attachment to worldly enjoyments will remember nothing but God in the hour of death. Otherwise he will think only of worldly things : wife, children, house, wealth, name and fame. Through practice a bird can be trained to repeat 'Radha-Krishna' ; but when a cat catches it, it only squawks.

"Therefore one should constantly practise the singing of God's name and glories, and meditation and contemplation as well. And further, one should always pray that one's attachment to the world may disappear and one's love for God's Lotus Feet may grow.

"Householders devoted to God live in the world like a maidservant, who performs her duties for her master but always keeps her mind fixed on her own native village ; that is to say, they do their duties in the world keeping their minds on God. Anyone leading a worldly life is sure to come in contact with its dirt ; but a householder who is a true devotee of God lives like the mudfish, which, though remaining in the mud, is not stained by it.

"Brahman and Sakti are identical. One acquires love and devotion quickly by calling on God as Mother."

Saying this, the Master sang :

High in the heaven of the Mother's feet, my mind was soaring
like a kite,
When came a blast of sin's rough wind that drove it swiftly toward
the earth,



Maya disturbed its even flight by bearing down upon one side,
 And I could make it rise no more.
 Entangled in the twisting string of love for children and for wife,
 Alas ! my kite was rent in twain.

It lost its crest of wisdom soon and downward plunged as I let
 it go ;

How could it hope to fly again, when all its top was torn away ?
 Though fastened with devotion's cord, it came to grief in playing
 here ;

Its six opponents⁴ worsted it.

Now Nareschandra rues this game of smiles and tears, and thinks
 it better

Never to have played at all.

He sang again :

O Mother, for Yasoda Thou wouldst dance, when she called Thee
 her precious "Blue Jewel" :⁵

Where hast Thou hidden that lovely form, O terrible Syama ?

Dance that way once for me, O Mother ! Throw down Thy sword
 and take the flute ;

Cast off Thy garland of heads, and wear Thy wild-flower gar-
 land. . . .

As Sri Ramakrishna sang, he left his seat and began to dance. The devotees, too, stood up. Every now and then the Master went into samadhi and the devotees gazed at him intently. Dr. Dukari touched the Master's eyeballs with his finger to test the genuineness of his samadhi. This disgusted the devotees.

When the music and dancing were over, the devotees took their seats. Just then Keshab arrived with some of his Brahmo disciples. Rajendra told him about their great joy in the Master's kirtan and requested Trailokya to sing again. Keshab replied, "Since Sri Ramakrishna has taken his seat, the kirtan will sound flat."

Trailokya and the Brahmo devotees sang :

Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,
 Sing aloud the name of Hari,
 Praise Lord Hari's name !
 And praising Hari's name, O mind,
 Cross the ocean of this world.

Hari dwells in earth, in water,
 Hari dwells in fire and air ;
 In sun and moon He dwells.
 Hari's ever living presence
 Fills the boundless universe.

While preparations were being made to give the guests something to eat, Sri Ramakrishna talked with Keshab.

MASTER (*with a smile*) : "Today I enjoyed very much the machine by which a man's picture is taken. One thing I noticed was that the impression

⁴ The six passions.

⁵ A pet name of the Baby Krishna.

doesn't stay on a bare piece of glass, but it remains when the glass is stained with a black solution. In the same way, mere hearing of spiritual talk doesn't leave any impression. People forget it soon afterwards. But they can retain spiritual instruction if they are stained inside with earnestness and devotion."

The Master was conducted to the second floor of the house and was asked to sit on a beautiful carpet. The ladies waited on him while he ate his meal. Keshab and the other devotees were also sumptuously fed.

Sunday, January 1, 1882

Sri Ramakrishna arrived with his devotees at the house of Jnan Choudhury, in Calcutta, to join the annual festival of the Simla Brahmo Samaj. Keshab, Ram, Manomohan, Balaram, Kedar, Narendra, Rakhal, and other devotees were present. Narendra had met the Master only a few days before at the temple garden at Dakshineswar. He used to participate now and then in the worship of the Simla Brahmo Samaj and sing for the congregation.

The worship was arranged according to the usual custom of the Samaj. First the scripture was read; then Narendra sang. It was dusk. The devotees made merry. The Master looked at the householder devotees seated around him and said with a smile: "Why shouldn't it be possible for a householder to give his mind to God? But the truth is that he no longer has his mind with him. If he had it, then he could certainly offer it to God. But, alas, the mind has been mortgaged—mortgaged to 'woman and gold'. So it is necessary for him constantly to live in the company of holy men. When he gets back his own mind, then he can devote it to spiritual practice; but first it is necessary to live constantly with the guru, wait on him, and enjoy the company of spiritual people. Either he should think of God in solitude day and night, or he should live with holy men. The mind left to itself gradually dries up. Take a jar of water, for instance. If the jar is set aside, the water dries up little by little. But that will not happen if the jar is kept immersed in the Ganges.

"The iron becomes red in the furnace of a smithy. Take it out and it becomes black as before. Therefore the iron must be heated in the furnace every now and then.

"Do you know what ignorance means? It is the feeling: 'This is my house; these are my relatives; I am the doer; and the household affairs go on smoothly because I manage them.' But to feel, 'I am the servant of God, His devotee, His son'—that is a good attitude.

"The 'I' cannot be effaced altogether. You may explain it away through reasoning, but the next moment it reappears, nobody knows from where. It is like a goat that still bleats faintly and jerks its legs even after its head has been cut off.

"But the 'I' that God retains in His devotee after he has seen Him is called the 'ripe I'. It is like a sword turned into gold by touching the philosopher's stone; you cannot hurt anybody with it."

Thus the Master talked, seated in the worship hall, and Keshab and the other devotees listened with rapt attention. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. The bell rang three times for the worship.

MASTER (*to Keshab and the others*) : "What's this ? I see you haven't yet begun your regular worship."

KESHAB : "What further worship do we need ? We are having all this."

MASTER : "Oh no, my dear sir ! Let the worship be performed according to your custom."

KESHAB : "Why ? We are getting on very well."

At the Master's repeated request Keshab began the worship. In the midst of it Sri Ramakrishna suddenly stood up and went into samadhi. The Brahmo devotees sang :

Chant, O mind, the name of Hari,
Sing aloud the name of Hari,
Praise Lord Hari's name !
And praising Hari's name, O mind,
Cross the ocean of this world. . . .

The Master still stood there absorbed in ecstasy. Keshab led him down very carefully from the temple to the courtyard. The music went on. The Master danced to the music, the devotees dancing around him.

After the refreshments Sri Ramakrishna again talked with Keshab. Soon he began to sing. Keshab sang with the Master :

The black bee of my mind is drawn in sheer delight
To the blue lotus flower of Mother Syama's feet,
The blue flower of the feet of Kali, Siva's Consort ;
Tasteless, to the bee, are the blossoms of desire.
My Mother's feet are black, and black, too, is the bee ;
Black is made one with black ! This much of the mystery
My mortal eyes behold, then hastily retreat.
But Kamalakanta's hopes are answered in the end ;
He swims in the Sea of Bliss, unmoved by joy or pain.

Again they sang :

High in the heaven of the Mother's feet, my mind was soaring like
a kite,
When came a blast of sin's rough wind that drove it swiftly
toward the earth. . . .

Both Keshab and the Master were in a state of divine fervour. The other devotees joined them and sang and danced till midnight.

The Master rested a few minutes and then said to Keshab : "Why did you send me presents when your son was married ? What shall I do with them ? Take them back."

Keshab smiled a little, and the Master continued : "Why do you write about me in your paper ? You cannot make a man great by writing about him in books and magazines. If God makes a man great, then everybody knows about him even though he lives in a forest. When flowers bloom in the deep woods, the bees find them, but the flies do not. What can man do ? Don't look up to him. Man is but a worm. The tongue that praises you today will abuse you tomorrow. I don't want name and fame. May I always remain the humblest of the humble and the lowliest of the lowly !"

Appendix B

A LETTER¹

My beloved brother M.,

Three days ago I received the fourth part of the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*² sent by you, and today I have finished reading it. You are blessed indeed. What heavenly nectar you have sprinkled all over the country! . . . A long time ago you wanted me to set down my conversations with the Master. Now I shall try to write them for you. But I was not born under the lucky star of an M., that I might jot down the days, the dates, and the hours of my visits with the Master and note down correctly all the words uttered by his holy lips. In this letter I am giving you as many of my experiences as I remember. Very likely I shall confuse the events of one day with another—and I have forgotten many things.

It was probably during the autumn holidays of 1881 that I met Sri Ramakrishna the first time. I arrived at Dakshineswar in a country boat and, going up the steps of the landing-ghat, asked someone where the Paramahansa was.

"There is the Paramahansa", was the reply. A man was pointed out on the north verandah, which faces the garden. He was sitting reclining against a bolster. He wore a black-bordered cloth. At the sight of the bolster and the black-bordered cloth I said to myself, "What kind of paramahansa is this?"³

Going nearer, I found him half leaning against the bolster with his hands clasped around his drawn-up knees. Then I thought: "Evidently he is not used to pillows as gentlemen are. So perhaps he is the Paramahansa." At his right, very near the pillow, sat a gentleman whose name, I came to know was Rajendra Lal Mitra, later an Assistant Secretary to the Government of Bengal. A little farther off sat some others.

After a few moments the Master said to Rajendra Babu, "See whether Keshab is coming." Evidently Keshab Sen was expected that day.

Someone walked away a few steps and, coming back, said, "No, he isn't."

After a brief interval, hearing a sound outside, he said, "Please look once more."

¹ Written to M. by Aswini Kumar Dutta, one of the saintly patriots of Bengal.

² The conversations of Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali, recorded by M.

³ A cloth with black borders, bolster, and so forth, regarded as articles of luxury, are used by householders. A paramahansa, on the other hand, is an all-renouncing monk.

Again someone went out and came back with the same reply.

Then Sri Ramakrishna laughed and said, quoting a popular saying, "The leaves rustle outside, and Radha says, 'Oh, here comes my Sweetheart!'" Continuing, he said: "You see, Keshab always tantalizes me like this. It is his way."

At dusk Keshab came with his party. Keshab bowed low before the Master, touching the ground with his forehead. The Master returned his salutation in the same manner.

Shortly afterwards Sri Ramakrishna said, in a state of partial consciousness: "Look! He has brought the whole Calcutta crowd. I am supposed to deliver a lecture. I won't do anything of the sort. Do it yourself if you like. Lecturing is none of my business."

Still in the ecstatic mood, he said with a divine smile: "I shall eat, drink, and be merry. I shall play and sleep. But I can't give lectures."

As Keshab Babu watched him, he became overpowered with divine emotion. Every now and then he said, "Ah me! Ah me!"

I too watched the Master and said to myself, "Can this be pretence?" I had never seen anything like it before, and you know how deep my faith is.

Coming back from samadhi, the Master said to Keshab: "Keshab, once I went to your temple. In the course of your preaching I heard you say, 'We shall dive into the river of devotion and go straight to the Ocean of Satchidananda.' At once I looked up [at the gallery where Keshab's wife and the other ladies were sitting] and thought, 'Then what will become of these ladies?' You see, Keshab, you are householders. How can you reach the Ocean of Satchidananda all at once? You are like a mongoose with a brick tied to its tail. When something frightens it, it runs up the wall and sits in a niche. But how can it stay there any length of time? The brick pulls it down and it falls to the floor with a thud. You may practise a little meditation, but the weight of wife and children will pull you down. You may dive into the river of devotion, but you must come up again. You will alternately dive and come up. How can you dive and disappear once for all?"

Keshab Babu said: "Can't a householder ever succeed? What about Maharshi Devendranath Tagore?"

Twice or thrice the Master repeated softly, "Devendranath Tagore—Devendra—Devendra" and bowed to him several times.

Then he said: "Let me tell you a story. A man used to celebrate the Durga Puja at his house with great pomp. Goats were sacrificed from sunrise to sunset. But after a few years the sacrifice was not so imposing. Then someone said to him, 'How is it, sir, that the sacrifice at your place has become such a tame affair?' 'Don't you see?' he said. 'My teeth are gone now.' Devendra is now devoted to meditation and contemplation. It is only natural that he should be, at his advanced age. But no doubt he is a great man.

"You see, as long as a man is under maya's spell, he is like a green coconut. When you scoop out the soft kernel from a green coconut, you cannot help scraping a little of the shell at the same time. But in the case of a ripe and dry coconut, the shell and kernel are separated from each other. When you

shake the fruit you can feel the kernel rattling inside. The man who is freed from maya is like a ripe and dry coconut. He feels the soul to be separated from the body. They are no longer connected with each other.

"It is the 'I' that creates all the trouble. Won't this wretched ego ever leave a person? You see a peepal-tree growing from the rubbish of a tumble-down house. You cut it down today, but tomorrow you find a new sprout shooting up. It is the same with the ego. You may wash seven times a cup that onions have been kept in, but the wretched smell never leaves it."

In the course of the conversation he said to Keshab: "Well, Keshab, I understand that your Calcutta babus say that God does not exist. Is that true? A Calcutta babu wants to climb the stairs. He takes one step, but before taking the next he cries out: 'Oh, my side! My side!' and drops down unconscious. His relatives raise a hue and cry and send for a doctor; but before the doctor arrives the man is very likely dead. And people of such stamina say, 'There is no God!'"

After an hour or so the kirtan began. What I saw then I shall never forget either in this life or in the lives to come. Everybody danced, Keshab included. The Master was in the centre. All danced around him in a circle. During the dancing Sri Ramakrishna suddenly stood motionless, transfixed in samadhi. A long time passed this way. After hearing his words and seeing all this, I said to myself, "Yes, a paramahansa indeed!"

Another day, probably in 1883, I visited the Master with a few young men from Srerampore. Looking at them, he asked, "Why have they come here?"

MYSELF: "To see you."

MASTER: "What's there to see in me? Why don't they look at the buildings and temples?"

MYSELF: "Sir, they haven't come to see those things. They have come to see you."

MASTER: "Ah! Then they must be flints. There is fire in them. You may keep a flint under water a thousand years, but the moment you strike it, sparks come out. They must be of that type. But it will be useless to try to strike fire out of me!"

At this last remark we all laughed. I do not recall now what other things he said to us that day. But it seems to me he told us about the renunciation of "woman and gold" and the impossibility of getting rid of the ego.

I visited him another day. When I bowed down to him and took a seat, he said, "Can you bring me some of that stuff—a little sour, a little sweet—that begins to fizz when you push down the cork?"

MYSELF: "Lemonade?"

MASTER: "Why don't you bring a bottle for me?"

I think I brought him a bottle. So far as I remember, I was alone with him that day. I asked him a few questions.

MYSELF : " Do you observe caste ? "

MASTER : " How can I say yes ? I ate curry at Keshab Sen's house. Let me tell you what once happened to me. A man with a long beard 'brought some ice here, but I didn't feel like eating it. A little later someone brought me a piece of ice from the same man, and I ate it with great relish. You see, caste restrictions fall away of themselves. As coconut and palm trees grow up, the branches drop off of themselves. Caste conventions drop off like that. But don't tear them off as those fools do [meaning the Brahmos]."

MYSELF : " What do you think of Keshab Babu ? "

MASTER : " Oh, he is a saintly man."

MYSELF : " And Trailokya Babu ? "

MASTER : " A fine man. He sings very well."

MYSELF : " Shivanath Babu ? "

MASTER : " . . . A very good man. But he argues."

MYSELF : " What is the difference between a Hindu and a Brahmo ? "

MASTER : " There is not much difference. In the serenade we have here, one flutist plays a single note right along, while another plays various melodies. The Brahmos play one note, as it were ; they hold to the formless aspect of God. But the Hindus bring out different melodies ; that is to say they enjoy God in His various aspects.

" The formless Deity and God with form may be likened to water and ice. The water freezes into ice. The ice melts into water through the heat of jnana. Water takes the form of ice through the cooling influence of bhakti.

" The Reality is one. People give It various names. Take the case of a lake with four landing-ghats on its four banks. People who draw water at one ghat call it 'jal', and those who draw it at the second ghat call it 'pani'. At the third ghat they call it 'water', and at the fourth, 'aqua'. But it is one and the same thing : water."

I told the Master that I had met Achalananda Tirthavadhuta of Barisal.

MASTER : " Isn't that Ramkumar of Kotrang ? "

MYSELF : " Yes, sir."

MASTER : " How did you like him ? "

MYSELF : " Very much."

MASTER : " Well, whom do you like better—him or me ? "

MYSELF : " Oh, can there be any comparison between you two ? He is a scholar, an erudite person ; but are you one ? "

Sri Ramakrishna was a little puzzled at my reply and became silent. A moment later I said : " He may be a scholar, but you are full of fun ! There is great fun in your company."

At this the Master laughed and said : " Well said ! Well said ! Right you are ! "

He asked me, " Have you seen my Panchavati ? "

MYSELF : " Yes sir."

He told me a little of what he had practised there—his various religious austerities. He also told me about Nangta.

¹ Perhaps the Master meant a Mohammedan.

"Then I asked him, "How can I realize God?"

MASTER : "You see, He is constantly attracting us, as a magnet attracts iron. But the iron cannot come to the magnet if it is covered with dirt. When the dirt is washed away, the iron is instantly drawn to the magnet. Weep for God and the tears will wash away the dirt from your mind."

As I was writing down his words, he remarked : "Look here. Only repeating the word 'Siddhi' will not produce intoxication. You must actually get some hemp, rub it in water, and then drink the solution. . . ."

Later he said : "Since you are going to lead a householder's life, create a roseate intoxication in your mind with the thought of God. You will be doing your duties, but let that pleasant intoxication remain with you. You cannot, of course, like Sukadeva, be so inebriated with the thought of God that you will lie naked and unconscious. As long as you have to live in the world, give God the power of attorney. Make over all your responsibilities to Him ; let Him do as He likes. Live in the world like a maidservant in a rich man's house. She bathes her master's children, washes them, feeds them, and takes affectionate care of them in many ways, as if they were her own children ; but in her heart she knows very well that they do not belong to her. No sooner is she dismissed than all is over ; she has no more relationship with the children.

"Before breaking open the jack-fruit you should rub your hands with oil in order to protect them from the sticky juice. Likewise, protect yourself with the oil of devotion ; then the world will not cling to you and you will not be affected by it."

All this time Sri Ramakrishna was seated on the floor. Now he got up and stretched himself on his cot.

He said to me, "Fan me a little."

I began to fan him and he was silent.

After a while he said : "Oh, it's so hot ! Why don't you dip the fan in water ?"

"Ah !" I said. "You have your fancies, too !" The Master smiled and drawled out, "And—why—not ?" "Very well !" I said. "Have your full measure of them." I cannot express in words how immensely I enjoyed his company that day.

The last time I visited him—you have mentioned it in the third part of your book⁵—I had with me the headmaster of our school, who had just then graduated. You met him the other day. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna saw him, he asked me : "Where did you pick him up ? He's a fine fellow !"

Then he continued : "You are a lawyer. You are very clever. Can you give me a little of your cleverness ? The other day your father came here and stayed three days."

MYSELF : "How did you find him ?"

MASTER : "A nice man. But now and then he talks nonsense."

MYSELF : "Please help him get over it when you see him next."

At this Sri Ramakrishna smiled a little.

MYSELF : "Please give us a few instructions."

⁵ Under May 23, 1885.



MASTER : " Do you know Hriday ? "

MYSELF : " Your nephew ? I know him only by name. "

MASTER : " Hriday used to say to me : ' Uncle, please don't give out your stock of instructions all at once. Why should you repeat the same things over and over again ? ' I would reply : ' You fool, what's that to you ? These are my words and if I like I shall repeat them a hundred thousand times. You keep quiet ! ' "

MYSELF (*smiling*) : " Exactly so ! "

A little later he sat up on the bed. He repeated " Om " several times and began to sing a song whose first line is :

Dive deep, O mind, dive deep in the Ocean of God's Beauty.

Hardly had he sung one or two lines when he himself dived deep and was lost in samadhi.

When the samadhi was over, he began to pace the room and with both hands pulled up the cloth he was wearing, till it reached his waist. One end of it was trailing on the floor and the other was hanging loose.

Nudging my companion, I whispered, " See how nicely he wears his cloth ! "

A moment later he threw away the cloth, with the words : " Ugh ! What a nuisance ! Off with it ! "

He began to pace up and down the room naked. From the northern end of the room he brought an umbrella and a stick, and asked us, " Are these yours ? "

Scarcely had I replied no when he said : " I knew it. I can judge a man by his stick and umbrella. They must belong to that man who was here some time ago and swallowed a lot of my words without understanding them. "

A few minutes later he sat down, still naked, on the northern end of his cot, facing the west, and asked me, " Well, do you consider me ungentlemanly ? "

MYSELF : " Of course not. You are a perfect gentleman. But why do you ask me that ? "

MASTER : " You see, Shivanath and others don't think I am a gentleman. When they come I have to wrap a cloth or something around me. Do you know Girish Ghosh ? "

MYSELF : " Which Girish Ghosh ? The one who is in the theatre ? "

MASTER : " Yes. "

MYSELF : " I have never seen him. But I know him by reputation. "

MASTER : " A good man. "

MYSELF : " They say he drinks. "

MASTER : " Let him ! Let him ! How long will he continue that ? Do you know Narendra ? "

MYSELF : " No, sir. "

MASTER : " I wish very much that you could meet him. He has passed the B. A. examination and is unmarried. "

MYSELF : " Very well, sir. I shall meet him."

MASTER : " Today there will be a kirtan at Ram Dutta's house. You may meet him there. Please go there this evening."

MYSELF : " All right."

MASTER : " Yes, do. Don't forget."

MYSELF : " It is your command. Shall I not obey it ? Surely I will go."

He showed us the pictures in his room and asked me whether a picture of Buddha could be had.

MYSELF : " Very likely."

MASTER : " Please get one for me."

MYSELF : " Very well. I'll bring one when I come again."

But alas, I never returned to Dakshineswar.

That evening I went to Ram Babu's house and met Narendra. In one of the rooms the Master sat reclining against a pillow. Narendra sat at his right, and I in front.

He asked Narendra to talk with me. But Narendra said : " I have a bad headache today. I don't feel like talking."

I replied, " Then let us put it off till another day."

And that came to pass in May or June of 1897, at Almora. The will of the Master had to be fulfilled and it was fulfilled after twelve years. Ah, how happily I spent those few days with Swami Vivekananda at Almora ! Sometimes at his house, sometimes at mine, and one day on the top of a hill with nobody accompanying us. I never met him after that. It was as if to fulfil the Master's wish that we saw each other at Almora.

I saw the Master not more than four or five times ; but in that short time we became so intimate that I felt as if we had been class-mates. How much liberty I took while speaking with him ! But no sooner had I left his presence than it flashed on me : " Goodness gracious ! Think where I have been ! " What I saw and received in those few days has sweetened my whole life. That Elysian smile of his, laden with nectar, I have locked up in the secret closet of my memory. That is the unending treasure of a hapless person like myself. A thrill of joy passes through my heart when I think how a grain of the bliss shed from that laughter has been sweetening the lives of millions, even in distant America. If that be my case, you may very well understand how lucky you are.



GLOSSARY

- abhyasayoga Yoga, or union with God, through practice.
- acharya Religious teacher.
- adharma Unrighteousness; the opposite of dharma.
- Adhyatma Ramayana* A book dealing with the life of Rama and harmonizing the ideals of jnana and bhakti.
- Advaita Non-duality; a school of the Vedanta philosophy, declaring the oneness of God, soul, and universe.
- Advaita Goswami An intimate companion of Sri Chaitanya.
- Adyasakti The Primal Energy; an epithet of the Divine Mother.
- agamani A class of songs invoking Durga, the Divine Mother.
- Ahalya The wife of the sage Gautama. Because of her misconduct she was turned into a stone by the curse of her husband. The sage, however, said that the touch of Rama's feet would restore her human form.
- ahamkara Ego or "I-consciousness". See four inner organs.
- Ajna The sixth centre in the Sushumna. See Kundalini.
- ajnana Ignorance, individual or cosmic, which is responsible for the non-perception of Reality.
- akasa Ether or space; the first of the five elements evolved from Brahman. It is the subtlest form of matter, into which all the elements are ultimately resolved.
- Akbar The great Mogul Emperor of India (A.D. 1542—1605).
- akshara Unchanging; also a name of Brahman.
- Alekh (*Lit.*, the Incomprehensible One) A name of God.
- Amrita Immortality.
- Anahata The fourth centre in the Sushumna. See Kundalini.
- Anahata Sabda Another name for Om.
- Ananda Bliss.
- anandamayakosha The sheath of bliss. See kosha.
- Anandamayi (*Lit.*, full of Bliss) An epithet of the Divine Mother.
- anna A small Indian coin, one sixteenth of a rupee.
- annamayakosha The gross physical sheath. See kosha.
- Annapurna A name of the Divine Mother as the Giver of Food.
- antaranga Belonging to the inner circle; generally used with reference to an intimate disciple.
- arati Worship of the Deity accompanied by the waving of lights.
- Arjuna A hero of the *Mahabharata* and the friend of Krishna. See Pandavas.
- artha Wealth, one of the four ends of human pursuit. See four fruits.
- asana Seat.
- asat Unreal.
- ashtami The eighth day of either lunar fortnight.
- Ashtavakra Samhita* A standard book on Advaita Vedanta.
- asrama Hermitage; also any one of the four stages of life: the celibate student stage, the married householder stage, the stage of retirement and contemplation, and the stage of religious mendicancy.
- Assam A province in the northeast corner of India.
- asti Is, or being.
- asura Demon.
- aswattha The peepal-tree.



Aswin The sixth month in the Hindu calendar, falling in the autumn season.

Atma Self, same as Atman.

Atman Self or Soul; denotes also the Supreme Soul, which, according to the Advaita Vedanta, is one with the individual soul.

Atmarama Satisfied in the Self.

Aum Same as Om.

Avadhuta A holy man of great renunciation mentioned in the *Bhagavata*.

Avatar Incarnation of God.

avidya Ignorance, cosmic or individual, which is responsible for the non-perception of Reality.

avidyamaya Maya, or illusion causing duality, has two aspects, namely, *avidyamaya* and *vidyamaya*. *Avidyamaya*, or the "maya of ignorance", consisting of anger, passion, and so on, entangles one in worldliness. *Vidyamaya*, or the "maya of knowledge", consisting of kindness, purity, unselfishness, and so on, leads one to liberation. Both belong to the relative world. See *maya*.

avidyasakti The power of ignorance.

Ayodhya The capital of Rama's kingdom in northern India; the modern Oudh.

baba The Bengali word for father.

babaji A name by which holy men of the Vaishnava sect are called.

babla A tree, the Indian acacia.

babu Well-to-do gentleman; also equivalent to Mr. or Esq.

Balai Pet name of Balarama, Sri Krishna's brother.

Balarama Sri Krishna's elder brother.

Banga Bengal.

Bāṅkuvihari A name of Sri Krishna.

Baul (*Lit.*, God-intoxicated devotee) Mendicant of a Vaishnava sect.

bel A tree whose leaves are sacred to Siva; also the fruit of the same tree.

Bhagavad Gita The well-known Hindu scripture.

Bhagavan (*Lit.*, One endowed with the six attributes, viz. infinite treasures, strength, glory, splendour, knowledge, and renunciation) An

epithet of the Godhead; also the Personal God of the devotee.

Bhagavata A sacred book of the Hindus, especially of the Vaishnavas, dealing with the life of Sri Krishna.

Bhagavati The Divine Mother.

bhairava An aspirant of the Tantrik sect; also denotes the God Siva, especially one of His eight frightful forms.

bhairavi A nun of the Tantrik sect.

bhajan Religious music.

bhajananda The bliss derived from the worship of God.

bhakta A follower of the path of bhakti, divine love; a worshipper of the Personal God.

bhakti Love of God; single-minded devotion to one's Chosen Ideal.

bhaktiyoga The path of devotion, followed by dualistic worshippers.

Bharadvaja A sage mentioned in the Purana.

Bharata A name of Arjuna; also a name of India.

Bhaskarananda A saint contemporary with Sri Ramakrishna.

bhava Existence; feeling; emotion; ecstasy; samadhi; also denotes any one of the five attitudes that a dualistic worshipper assumes toward God. The first of these attitudes is that of peace; assuming the other four, the devotee regards God as the Master, Child, Friend, or Beloved.

bhavamukha An exalted state of spiritual experience, in which the aspirant keeps his mind on the border line between the Absolute and the Relative. From this position he can contemplate the ineffable and attributeless Brahman and also participate in the activities of the relative world, seeing in it the manifestation of God alone.

bhava samadhi Ecstasy in which the devotee retains his ego and enjoys communion with the Personal God.

Bhavatarini (*Lit.*, the Saviour of the Universe) A name of the Divine Mother.

bheda Difference.

Bhil A savage tribe of India.

- Bhishma** One of the great heroes of the war of Kurukshetra, described in the *Mahabharata*.
- bhoga** Enjoyment.
- bhramara** The black bee.
- Bibbishana** A brother of Ravana, the monster-king of Ceylon, whom he succeeded ; but, unlike him, a faithful devotee of Rama.
- bija mantra** The sacred word with which a guru initiates his disciple.
- Bodha** Consciousness ; Absolute Knowledge.
- Bodh-Gaya** A place near Gaya, where Buddha attained illumination.
- Brahma** The name by which the Brahmos invoke God.
- Brahmâ** The Creator God ; the First Person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Vishnu and Siva.
- brahmachari** A religious student devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline ; a celibate belonging to the first stage of life. *See* four stages of life.
- brahmacharya** The first of the four stages of life : the life of an unmarried student. *See* four stages of life.
- Brahmajnana** The Knowledge of Brahman.
- Brahmajnani** A knower of Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna used the term "modern Brahmajnanis" to denote the members of the Brahmo Samaj.
- Brahmamayi** (*Lit.*, the Embodiment of Brahman) A name of the Divine Mother.
- Brahman** The Absolute; the Supreme Reality of the Vedanta philosophy.
- Brahmananda** The bliss of communion with Brahman.
- Brahmanda** (*Lit.*, the egg of Brahma) The universe.
- Brahmâni** The Consort of Brahma.
- Brâhmani** (*Lit.*, brahmin woman) The brahmin woman who taught Sri Ramakrishna the Vaishnava and Tantra disciplines, also known as the Bhairavi Brahmani.
- brahmarshi** A rishi or holy man endowed with the Knowledge of Brahman.
- brahmin** The highest caste in Hindu society.
- Brahmo** Member of the Brahmo Samaj.
- Brahmo Sabha** The meeting of the Brahmos.
- Brahmo Samaj** A theistic organization of India, founded by Raja Ram-mohan Roy.
- Braja** Same as Vrindavan.
- Brinde** One of the gopis ; also the name of a maidservant at the Dakshineswar temple garden.
- Buddha** (*Lit.*, one who is enlightened) The founder of Buddhism.
- Buddha-Gaya** Same as Bodh-Gaya.
- buddhi** The intelligence or discriminating faculty. *See* four inner organs.
- Captain** Colonel Viswanath Upadhyaya of Nepal, the Resident of the Nepalese Government in Calcutta, and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. The Master addressed Viswanath as "Captain".
- causal body** One of the three bodies or seats of the soul, the other two being the gross body and the subtle body. It is identical with deep sleep.
- chaddar** An upper garment.
- Chaitanya** Spiritual Consciousness ; also the name of a prophet born in A.D. 1485, who lived at Navadvip, Bengal, and emphasized the path of divine love for the realization of God ; he is also known as Gauranga, Gaur, Gora, or Nimai.
- Chaitanyalila** A play by Girish Chandra Ghosh depicting the life of Sri Chaitanya.
- Chaitra** The last month in the Hindu calendar, falling in the spring season.
- chakka** A vegetable curry.
- chakora** A species of bird.
- chakra** Any one of the six centres, or lotuses, in the Sushumna, through which the Kundalini rises. *See* Kundalini.
- chamara** A fan made of a yak tail, used in the temple service.
- chanabara** A Bengali sweetmeat made of cheese, first fried in butter and then soaked in syrup.
- chandala** An untouchable.
- Chandi** A sacred book of the Hindus, in which the Divine Mother is described as the Ultimate Reality.

- Chandidas The name of a Vaishnava saint.
- chandni An open portico ; the word is used in the text to denote the open portico at the Dakshineswar temple, with steps leading to the Ganges.
- Chandravali One of the gopis of Vrindavan.
- charanamrita The water in which the image of the Deity is bathed ; it is considered very sacred.
- chatak A species of bird.
- chetana samadhi Communion with God in which the devotee retains "I-consciousness" and is aware of his relationship with God.
- Chidakasa The Akasa, or Space, of Chit, Absolute Consciousness ; the All-pervading Spirit.
- Chidananda The bliss of God-Consciousness.
- Chidatma The soul as embodiment of Intelligence and Consciousness.
- Chinmaya The embodiment of Spirit.
- Chintamani A mythical gem which has the power to grant its possessor whatever he may wish for ; also a name of God.
- Chit Consciousness.
- Chitsakti The Supreme Spirit as Power.
- chitta The mind-stuff. See four inner organs.
- Chosen Ideal. See Ishta.
- daitya Demon.
- dal Lentils ; also a soup made from lentils.
- Damodara A name of Krishna.
- dana Ghost.
- dandi A sect of sannyasis who always carry a staff.
- dargah Burial place of a Mussalman saint, considered sacred.
- darśanas, the six The six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, namely, the Samkhya of Kapila, the Yoga of Patanjali, the Vaisheshika of Kanada, the Nyaya of Gautama, the Purva Mimamsa of Jaimini, and the Vedanta or Uttara Mimamsa of Vyasa.
- Dasahara A Hindu festival.
- Dasaratha The father of Rama.
- Dasarathi A mystic poet of Bengal.
- dasya One of the five attitudes assumed by the dualistic worshipper toward his Chosen Ideal : the attitude of a servant toward his master.
- Dattatreya The name of a great Hindu saint.
- daya Compassion.
- Dayamaya The Compassionate One.
- Dayananda The founder of the Arya Samaj (A.D. 1824—1883).
- deva (*Lit.*, shining one) A god.
- Devaki The mother of Sri Krishna.
- devarshi A godly person endowed with Supreme Knowledge ; an epithet generally applied to Narada.
- devata Deity or god.
- Devendra(nath) Tagore A religious leader of Sri Ramakrishna's time ; father of Rabindranath Tagore.
- devotee The word is generally used in the text to denote one devoted to God, a worshipper of the Personal God, or a follower of the path of love. A devotee of Sri Ramakrishna is one who is devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and follows his teachings. The word "disciple", when used in connection with the Master, refers to one who had been initiated into spiritual life by Sri Ramakrishna and who regarded Sri Ramakrishna as his guru.
- dharma Righteousness, one of the four ends of human pursuit ; generally translated as "religion", it signifies rather the inner principle of religion. See four fruits. The word is also loosely used to mean "duty".
- dhoti A man's wearing-cloth.
- Dhruva A saint in Hindu mythology.
- Dhruva Ghat A bathing-place on the Jamuna river at Vrindavan.
- Dolayatra The Hindu spring festival associated with Sri Krishna.
- dome One of the lowest castes among the Hindus.
- Draupadi The wife of the five Pandava brothers.
- Drona One of the great military teachers in the *Mahabharata*.
- Dulali One of the pet names of Radha.
- Durga A name of the Divine Mother.
- Durga Puja The worship of Durga.

durva grass Common grass, used in worship.

Durvasa A sage with a very angry disposition, described in the Purana.

Duryodhana One of the heroes of the *Mahabharata*, the chief rival of the Pandava brothers.

Dvaita The philosophy of Dualism.

Dwapara The third of the four yugas or world cycles. See yuga.

Dwaraka The capital of Krishna's kingdom, situated in western India; one of the four principal holy places of India, the other three being Kedarnath, Puri, and Rameswaram.

ego of Knowledge (of Devotion) The ego purified and illumined by the Knowledge (or Love) of God. Some souls, after realizing their oneness with Brahman in samadhi, come down to the plane of relative consciousness. In this state they retain a very faint feeling of ego so that they may teach spiritual knowledge to others. This ego, called by Sri Ramakrishna the "ego of Knowledge", does not altogether efface their knowledge of oneness with Brahman even in the relative state of consciousness. The bhakta, the lover of God, coming down to the relative plane after having attained samadhi, retains the "I-consciousness" by which he feels himself to be a lover, a child, or a servant of God. Sri Ramakrishna called this the "devotee ego", the "child ego", or the "servant ego".

eight fetters Namely, hatred, shame, lineage, pride of good conduct, fear, secretiveness, caste, and grief.

eight siddhis or occult powers Namely, the ability to make oneself small as an atom, light as air, etc.

ekadasi The eleventh day after the full or new moon, which a devotee spends in full or partial fasting, prayer, and worship.

ektara A musical instrument with one string.

"Englishman" A term often used by Sri Ramakrishna in referring to men educated in English schools or influenced by European ideas.

esraj A stringed musical instrument.

ether Akasa or all-prevading space.

fakir Beggar; often a religious mendicant.

five cosmic principles Namely, ether (akasa), air (vayu), fire (agni), water (ap), and earth (kshiti).

five vital forces or pranas Namely, prana, apana, samana, vyana, and udana. These five names denote the five functions of the vital force, such as breathing, digesting, evacuating, etc.

four fruits The four ends of human pursuit, namely, dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (fulfilment of desire), and moksha (liberation).

four inner organs The four inner organs of perception, namely, manas (mind), buddhi (the discriminating faculty), chitta (mind-stuff), and ahankara ("I-consciousness").

four stages of life Namely, brahmacharya (life of unmarried student), garhasthya (life of married householder), vanaprastha (life of retired householder), and sannyas (life of monk).

gandharva A class of demigods who are the musicians of heaven.

Ganesa The god with the elephant's head; the god of success, the son of Siva.

Ganga The Ganges.

Gangasagar The mouth of the Ganges at the Bay of Bengal, considered a sacred place by the Hindus.

ganja Indian hemp.

garden house A rich man's country house set in a garden.

garhasthya The second of the four stages of life: the life of a married householder. See four stages of life.

Gaur Short for Gauranga.

Gauranga A name of Sri Chaitanya.

Gauri (*Lit.*, of fair complexion) A name of the Divine Mother; also the name of a pundit devoted to Sri Ramakrishna.

Gaya A sacred place in northern India.

Gayatri A sacred verse of the Vedas recited daily by Hindus of the three upper castes after they have been invested with the sacred thread ; also the presiding deity of the Gayatri.

gerrua (*Lit.*, ochre) The ochre cloth of a monk.

ghat Bathing-place on a lake or river.

ghee Butter clarified by boiling.

Ghoshpara A Vaishnava sect, the members of which generally indulge in questionable religious practices.

Giri One of the ten denominations of monks belonging to the school of Sankara.

Girirani (*Lit.*, the Queen of the Mountain) Consort of King Himalaya and mother of Uma.

Gita Same as the *Bhagavad Gita*.

golakdham A game in which the player tries to get to "heaven" by passing through different planes ; on each false step he falls into a particular "hell".

Goloka The Celestial Abode of Vishnu.

Gopala The Baby Krishna.

gopas The cowherd boys of Vrindavan, playmates of Sri Krishna.

gopis The milkmaids of Vrindavan, companions and devotees of Sri Krishna.

Gora A name of Sri Chaitanya.

goswami Vaishnava priest.

Govardhan A hill near Vrindavan, which Sri Krishna lifted with His finger to protect the villagers from a deluge of rain.

Govinda(ji) A name of Sri Krishna.

gram A kind of bean.

Great Cause The Ultimate Reality.

Guhaka An untouchable who was a friend of Rama.

gūna According to the Samkhya philosophy, Prakriti (nature), in contrast with Purusha (soul), consists of three gunas (qualities or strands) known as sattva, rajas, and tamas. Tamas stands for inertia or dullness, rajas for activity or restlessness, and sattva for balance or wisdom.

guru(deva) Spiritual teacher.

Gurumaharaj A respectful way of referring to the guru.

Haladhari A priest in the temple garden at Dakshineswar and a cousin of Sri Ramakrishna.

Haldarpukur A small lake at Kamar-pukur.

halua A pudding made of farina.

Hanuman The great monkey devotee of Rama, mentioned in the *Ramayana*.

Hara A name of Siva.

Hardwar A sacred place on the bank of the Ganges at the foot of the Himalayas.

Hari God ; a name of Vishnu, the Ideal Deity of the Vaishnavas.

Haridas A disciple of Sri Chaitanya.

Hari Om Sacred words by which God is often invoked.

hathayoga A school of yoga that aims chiefly at physical health and well-being.

hathayogi A student of hatha-yoga.

havishya Food consisting of boiled rice, butter, and milk, and considered very holy.

Hazra A devotee who lived at the Dakshineswar temple garden and was of a perverse disposition. Same as Pratap Hazra.

"hero" A religious aspirant described in the Tantra, who is permitted sexual intercourse under certain conditions.

hide-and-seek The Indian game of hide-and-seek, in which the leader, known as the "granny", bandages the eyes of the players and hides herself. The players are supposed to find her. If any player can touch her, the bandage is removed from his eyes and he is released from the game.

hinche A kind of aquatic plant eaten as greens.

Hiranyakasipu A demon king in Hindu mythology, the father of Prahlada.

Hiranyaksha A demon in Hindu mythology.

Holy Mother The name by which Sri Ramakrishna's wife was known among his devotees.

homa A Vedic sacrifice in which oblations are offered into a fire.

- Hriday** Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, who served as his attendant during the period of his spiritual discipline. Also called Hridu and Hride. He was expelled from the temple garden at Dakshineswar on account of certain of his actions which displeased the temple authorities.
- Hrishikesh** A village on the Ganges at the foot of the Himalayas, where sadhus practise austerities.
- hubble-bubble** A water-pipe for smoking.
- Ida** A nerve in the spinal column. See Sushumna.
- Indra** The king of the gods.
- Indrani** The consort of Indra.
- Ishan** A name of Siva ; also the name of a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.
- Ishta(deva)** The Chosen Ideal, Spiritual Ideal, or Ideal Deity of the devotee.
- Isvara** The Personal God.
- Isvarakoti** A perfected soul born with a special spiritual message for humanity. "An Incarnation of God or one born with some of the characteristics of an Incarnation is called an Isvarakoti." (Sri Ramakrishna)
- Jadabharata** A great saint in Hindu mythology.
- jada samadhi** Communion with God in which the aspirant appears lifeless, like an inert object.
- Jagadamba** (*Lit.*, the Mother of the Universe) A name of the Divine Mother.
- Jagai** Jagai and Madhai were two ruffians redeemed by Gauranga.
- Jagannath** The Lord of the Universe ; a name of Vishnu.
- Jagannath temple** The celebrated temple at Puri.
- Jagaddhatri** (*Lit.*, the Bearer of the Universe) A name of the Divine Mother. In this form She is represented as riding a lion in the act of subduing an elephant.
- jal** The Bengali word for water.
- Jamuna** The sacred river Jumna, a tributary of the Ganges.
- Janaka, King** One of the ideal kings in Hindu mythology and the father of Sita. Sri Ramakrishna often described him as the ideal householder, who combined yoga with enjoyment of the world.
- japa** Repetition of God's name.
- Jatila and Kurtila** Two trouble-makers depicted in the *Bhagavata*, in the episode of Sri Krishna and the gopis of Vrindavan.
- jilipi** A kind of sweetmeat.
- jiva** The embodied soul ; a living being ; an ordinary man.
- jivakoti** An ordinary man.
- jivanmukta** One liberated from maya while living in the body.
- jivatma** The embodied soul.
- jnana** Knowledge of God arrived at through reasoning and discrimination ; also denotes the process of reasoning by which the Ultimate Truth is attained. The word is generally used to denote the knowledge by which one is aware of one's identity with Brahman.
- jnanayoga** The path of knowledge, consisting of discrimination, renunciation, and other disciplines.
- jnani** One who follows the path of knowledge and discrimination to realize God ; generally used to denote a non-dualist.
- Jung Bahadur** A high official of the Maharaja of Nepal.
- "ka"** The first consonant of the Sanskrit alphabet.
- Kabir** A medieval religious reformer, mystic, and writer of songs. He lived during the last part of the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth century. Born in the low caste of the weavers, he became the founder of a religious sect. On account of the breadth and universality of his teachings, he was revered by the Mohamedans and the Hindus alike.
- kadamba** A favourite tree of Sri Krishna.
- Kaikeyi** One of the wives of King Dasaratha and the mother of Bharata ; through her evil machinations the king banished Rama to the forest.
- Kailas** A peak of the Himalayas, regarded as the sacred Abode of Siva.
- kaivarta** The fisherman caste.

- Kala** A name of Siva ; black ; death ; time.
- Kali** A name of the Divine Mother ; the presiding Deity of the Dakshineswar temple. She is often referred to and addressed by Sri Ramakrishna as the Adyasakti, the Primal Energy. Also one of the intimate disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.
- kalia** A rich preparation of fish or meat.
- Kalidasa** The great Sanskrit poet and author of *Sakuntala*.
- Kalighat** A section of northern Calcutta, where is situated the famous temple of Kali.
- Kaliya** The name of a venomous snake subdued by Sri Krishna.
- Kaliyadaman Ghat** A bathing-place on the Jamuna at Vrindavan, where Sri Krishna subdued the snake Kaliya.
- Kaliyuga** One of the four yugas or cycles. See yuga.
- Kalki** The name of the next and last Incarnation, according to the Purana.
- kalmi** An aquatic creeper with numerous ramifications.
- Kalpataru** The Wish-fulfilling Tree ; refers to God.
- kama** Fulfilment of desire, one of the four ends of human pursuit. See four fruits.
- Kamalakanta** A mystic poet of Bengal.
- kamandalu** The water-bowl of a monk.
- Kamarpukur** Sri Ramakrishna's birth-place.
- kaminikanchan** (*Lit.*, "woman and gold") A term used by Sri Ramakrishna to refer to lust and greed.
- Kamsa** Sri Krishna's uncle, the personification of evil, whom Sri Krishna ultimately killed.
- Kanai** A pet name of the youthful Sri Krishna.
- Kanchi** A holy place in southern India.
- Kapila** A great sage in Hindu mythology, the reputed author of the Samkhya philosophy.
- karanā** Cause ; also consecrated wine.
- karma** Action in general ; duty ; ritualistic worship.
- karmayoga** (*Lit.*, union with God through action) The path by which the aspirant seeks to realize God through work without attachment ; also the ritualistic worship prescribed in the scriptures for realizing God.
- Karna** A hero of the *Mahabharata*.
- karta** Doer ; master.
- Kartabhaja** A minor Vaishnava sect which teaches that men and women should live together in the relationship of love and gradually idealize their love by looking on each other as divine.
- Kartika** A son of Siva ; commander-in-chief of the army in heaven.
- Kasi** Benares.
- kathak** A professional reciter of stories from the Purana in an assembly.
- Katyayani** A name of the Divine Mother.
- Kausalya** The mother of Rama.
- kaviraj** Native physician of India.
- kayastha** One of the subsidiary castes in Bengal.
- Kedar(nath)** A high peak in the Himalayas ; one of the four principal holy places of India, the other three being Dwaraka, Puri, and Rameswaram.
- Kesava** A name of Sri Krishna.
- Keshab Bharati** The monastic teacher of Sri Chaitanya.
- Keshab (Chandra Sen)** The celebrated Brahmo leader (A.D. 1838—1884).
- Kha** (*Lit.*, akasa) A symbol of the All-pervading Consciousness.
- khoka** Baby.
- kirtan** Devotional music, often accompanied by dancing.
- kirtani** A professional woman singer of kirtan.
- kosakusi** Metal articles used in worship.
- kosha** (*Lit.*, sheath or covering) The following are the five koshas as described in the Vedanta philosophy : (1) the annamayakosha, or gross physical sheath, made of and sustained by food ; (2) the pranamayakosha, or vital sheath, consisting of

the five vital forces ; (3) the *manomayakosha*, or mental sheath ; (4) the *vijñanamayakosha*, or sheath of intelligence ; and (5) the *anandamayakosha*, or sheath of bliss. These five sheaths, arranged one inside the other, cover the Soul, which is the innermost of all and untouched by the characteristics of the sheaths.

koul A worshipper of Kali who follows the "left-hand" rituals of the Tantra.

kripasiddha One who attains perfection through the *grace* of God and apparently without any effort.

Krishna One of the Ideal Deities of the Vaishnavas.

Krishnachaitanya A name of Sri Chaitanya.

Krishnayatra A theatrical performance depicting the life of Sri Krishna.

kshara Changeable.

kshatriya The second or warrior caste in Hindu society.

kshir Milk thickened by boiling.

Kubir A Bengali mystic poet.

Kumara Sambhava A famous book by Kalidasa.

Kumari Puja (*Lit.*, the worship of a virgin) A ritualistic worship prescribed by the Tantra, in which a virgin is worshipped as the manifestation of the Divine Mother of the Universe.

kumbhaka Retention of breath ; a process in *pranayama*, or breath-control, described in *rajayoga* and *hatha-yoga*.

Kumbhakarna A brother of Ravana mentioned in the *Ramayana*, who slept six months at a time.

kumbhamela An assembly of monks held every three years in one of several holy places in India.

Kundalini (*Lit.*, the Serpent Power) It is the spiritual energy lying dormant in all individuals. According to the Tantra there are six centres in the body, designated as *Muladhara*, *Svadhithana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Visuddha*, and *Ajna*. These are the dynamic centres where the spiritual energy becomes vitalized and finds special expression with appropriate spiritual perception and mystic vision.

These centres, placed in the *Sushumna*, form the ascending steps by which the *Kundalini*, or spiritual energy, passes from the foot of the spine to the cerebrum. When an easy pathway is formed along the *Sushumna* through these centres, and the *Kundalini* encounters no resistance in its movements upward and downward, then there is the *Shatchakrabhedha*, which means, literally, the penetrating of the six chakras, or mystic centres. The *Muladhara* chakra, situated between the base of the sexual organ and the anus, is regarded as the seat of the *Kundalini*. The centres are metaphorically described as lotuses. The *Muladhara* is said to be a four-petalled lotus. The *Svadhithana* chakra, situated at the base of the sexual organ, is a six-petalled lotus. The *Manipura*, situated in the region of the navel, contains ten petals. The *Anahata*, placed in the region of the heart, is a twelve-petalled lotus. The *Visuddha*, at the lower end of the throat, has sixteen petals. The *Ajna*, situated in the space between the eyebrows, is a two-petalled lotus. In the cerebrum there is the *Sahasrara*, the thousand-petalled lotus, the abode of *Siva*, which is as white as the silvery full moon, as bright as lightning, and as mild and serene as moonlight. This is the highest goal, and here the awakened spiritual energy manifests itself in its full glory and splendour.

kuthi The bungalow in the *Dakshineswar* temple garden, where the proprietors and their guests stayed while visiting *Dakshineswar*.

Lakshmana The third brother of Rama.

Lakshmi The Consort of Vishnu and Goddess of Fortune.

lila The divine play ; the Relative. The creation is often explained by the Vaishnavas as the *lila* of God, a conception that introduces elements of spontaneity and freedom into the universe. As a philosophical term, the *Lila* (the Relative) is the correlative of the *Nitya* (the Absolute).

lotus Each of the six centres along the Sushumna is called a lotus, since they have a form like that of a lotus blossom. See Kundalini.

luchi A thin bread made of flour and fried in butter.

M. Mahendranath Gupta, one of Sri Ramakrishna's foremost householder disciples and the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Madan(a) The god of love in Hindu mythology; also a Bengali mystic and writer of songs.

Madhai See Jagai.

Madhava A name of Sri Krishna.

madhavi A creeper.

Madhu and Kaitabha Two demons killed by the Divine Mother; the story is narrated in the *Chandi*.

madhur One of the five attitudes cherished by the Vaishnava worshipper toward his Ideal Deity, Krishna: the attitude of a wife toward her husband or of a woman toward her paramour.

Madhusudan(a) (*Lit.*, the Slayer of the demon Madhu) A name of Sri Krishna.

Mahabharata A famous Hindu epic.

mahabhava The most intense ecstatic love of God.

Mahadeva (*Lit.*, the Great God) A name of Siva.

Maha-Kala Siva; the Absolute.

Maha-Kali A name of the Divine Mother.

Mahakarana (*Lit.*, the Great Cause) The Transcendental Reality.

Mahakasa The space of Infinity.

Mahamaya The Great Illusionist; a name of Kali, the Divine Mother.

Mahanirvana The great Nirvana or samadhi.

Māhanirvana Tantra A standard book on Tantra philosophy.

Maharshi (*Lit.*, a great rishi or seer of truth) An epithet often applied to Devendranath Tagore, father of the poet Rabindranath.

Mahastami The second day of the worship of Durga, the Divine Mother.

mahat The cosmic mind; a term used in the Samkhya philosophy, denot-

ing the second category in the evolution of the universe.

mahatma A high-souled person.

Mahavayu Cosmic Consciousness or the Life Force. The word is also used to denote a current felt in the spinal column when the Kundalini is awakened.

Mahavir (*Lit.*, great hero) A name of Hanuman, the monkey devotee of Rama.

mahut Elephant-driver.

Maidan A great field in Calcutta.

Malaya breeze The fragrant breeze that blows from the Malaya (Western Ghat) Mountains.

manas Mind. See four inner organs.

Manasarovar A sacred lake in Tibet.

Mandodari Ravana's wife.

Manikarnika Ghat The famous cremation ground in Benares.

Manipura The third centre in the Sushumna. See Kundalini.

manja A glue of barley and powdered glass with which kite-strings are given a sharp cutting-edge.

manomayakosha The mental sheath. See kosha.

mantra Holy Sanskrit text; also the sacred formula used in japa.

Manu The great Hindu lawgiver.

Manusamhita A book on Hindu law by Manu.

Mahratta A race inhabiting the province of Bombay.

Marwari An inhabitant of Marwar, in Rajputana, in central India.

math Monastery.

Mathur The son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, and a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, whom he provided "with all the necessities of life at the temple garden."

maya Ignorance obscuring the vision of God; the Cosmic Illusion on account of which the One appears as many, the Absolute as the Relative; it is also used to denote attachment.

"maya of ignorance" See avidya-maya.

"maya of knowledge" See avidya-maya.

mayavadi A follower of the Maya theory of the Vedanta philosophy, according to which the world of

- names and forms is illusory, like a dream.
- Mimamsaka A follower of the Purva Mimamsa, one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy.
- Mirabai A great medieval woman saint of the Vaishnava sect.
- mlechchha A non-Hindu, a barbarian. This is a term of reproach applied by the orthodox Hindus to foreigners, who do not conform to the established usages of Hindu religion and society. The word corresponds to the "heathen" of the Christians and the "kafir" of the Mussalmans.
- mohant The abbot of a monastery.
- moksha Liberation or final emancipation, one of the four ends of human pursuit. See four fruits.
- mridanga An earthen drum used in devotional music.
- mukti Liberation from the bondage of the world, which is the goal of spiritual practice.
- Muladhara The first and lowest centre in the Sushumna. See Kundalini.
- muni A holy man given to solitude and contemplation.
- munsiff A judicial officer.
- Mussalman A follower of Mohammed.
- Nada The Word-Brahman, Om.
- nahabat Music tower.
- Naishadha A famous Sanskrit treatise by Sriharsha.
- Nanak The founder of the Sikh religion and the first of the ten Gurus of the Sikhs. He was born in the Punjab in A.D. 1469 and died in 1538.
- Nanda(ghosh) Sri Krishna's foster-father.
- Nandi A follower of Siva.
- Nangta (*Lit.*, the Naked One) By this name Sri Ramakrishna referred to Totapuri, the sannyasi who initiated him into monastic life and who went about naked.
- Narada A great sage and lover of God in Hindu mythology.
- Narada Pancharatra A scripture of the Bhakti cult.
- Naralila God manifesting Himself as man.
- Narayana A name of Vishnu.
- Narayani The Consort of Narayana ; a name of the Divine Mother.
- Narendra(nath) A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, subsequently world-famous as Swami Vivekananda.
- Nareschandra A mystic poet of Bengal.
- Narmada A river in central India flowing into the Arabian Sea.
- natmandir A spacious hall supported by pillars in front of a temple, meant for devotional music, religious assemblies, and the like.
- Navadvip A town in Bengal which was the birth-place of Sri Chaitanya.
- Navavidhan (*Lit.*, the New Dispensation) The name of the Brahmo Samaj organized by Keshab Chandra Sen after his disagreement with the members of the Brahmo Samaj.
- nax A card-game.
- neem A tree with bitter leaves.
- "Neti, neti" (*Lit.*, "Not this, not this") The negative process of discrimination, advocated by the followers of the non-dualistic Vedanta.
- New Dispensation See Navavidhan.
- ni The seventh note in the Indian musical scale.
- Nidhu Babu A composer of light melodies.
- Nidhu Grove A sacred grove in Vrindavan, where Sri Krishna played with the gopis in His childhood.
- Nidhuvan Same as Nidhu Grove.
- Nikasha The mother of Ravana.
- nikunja Bower.
- Nimai A familiar name of Sri Chaitanya.
- Nimai-sannyas "Chaitanya's Renunciation"; a play describing Sri Chaitanya's embracing of the monastic life.
- Niranjan(a) (*Lit.*, the Stainless One) A name of God ; also one of the intimate disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.
- nirguna Without attributes.
- Nirguna Brahman (*Lit.*, Brahman without attributes) A term used to describe the Absolute.
- Nirvana Final absorption in Brahman, or the All-pervading Reality, by the annihilation of the individual ego.

nirvikalpa samadhi The highest state of samadhi, in which the aspirant realizes his total oneness with Brahman.

nishtha Single-minded devotion or love.

Nitai A pet name of Nityananda.

Nitya The Absolute.

Nitya-Kali A name of the Divine Mother.

nityakarma Religious ceremonies which a householder must perform every day, but which are not obligatory for a sannyasi.

Nityananda (*Lit.*, Eternal Bliss) The name of a beloved disciple and companion of Sri Chaitanya.

nityasiddha (*Lit.*, eternally perfect) A term used by Sri Ramakrishna to describe some of his young disciples endowed with great spiritual power.

Nrisimha (*Lit.*, Man-lion) A Divine Incarnation mentioned in the Purana.

Nyaya Indian Logic, one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, founded by Gautama.

Olcott, Col. One of the well-known leaders of the Theosophical Society.

Om The most sacred word of the Vedas ; also written as Aum. It is a symbol of God and of Brahman.

ostad Teacher of music.

Padmalochan A great pundit of Bengal, who recognized the true significance of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences.

pagli Mad woman.

pakhoaj A kind of double drum.

pana Aquatic plants like algae or water hyacinths, often found covering the surface of lakes in tropical countries.

Panchadasi The name of a book on Vedanta philosophy.

panchatapa (*Lit.*, the austerity of five fires) While practising this discipline, the aspirant sits under the blazing sun, in the summer season, with four fires burning around him. Seated in the midst of these five fires he practises japa and meditation.

Panchavati A grove of five sacred trees planted by Sri Ramakrishna in

the temple garden at Dakshineswar for his practice of spiritual discipline.

Pandava(s) The five sons of Pandu : King Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula, and Sahadeva. They are some of the chief heroes of the *Mahabharata*.

pani Water.

Panini A well-known Sanskrit grammar composed by Panini.

Parabrahman The Supreme Brahman.

paramahamsa One belonging to the highest order of sannyasis.

Paramahamsa(deva) A name for Sri Ramakrishna.

Paramatman The Supreme Soul.

Parasurama Warrior sage in Hindu mythology, regarded as a Divine Incarnation.

Parikshit A king of the lunar race and grandson of Arjuna, mentioned in the *Mahabharata*.

Parvati Daughter of King Himalaya; the Consort of Siva, She is regarded as an Incarnation of the Divine Mother ; one of Her names is Uma.

Patanjala One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, also known as the Yoga philosophy.

Pavhari Baba An ascetic and yogi of great distinction who was a contemporary of Sri Ramakrishna.

Phalgu A river in northern India which flows under a surface of sand.

pice An Indian coin, one fourth of an anna.

Pingala A nerve in the spinal column. See Sushumna.

Prabhas A holy place in Kathiawar, in western India, where Sri Krishna gave up His body.

Prahlada A great devotee of Vishnu, whose life is described in the Purana. While a boy, he was tortured for his piety by his father, the demon King Hiranyakasipu. The Lord, in His incarnation as Man-lion, slew the father.

Prakriti Primordial Nature, which, in association with Purusha, creates the universe. It is one of the categories of the Samkhya philosophy.

prana The vital breath that sustains life in a physical body. See five vital forces.

pranamayakosha The vital sheath, consisting of the five pranas. See kosha.

Pranava Om.

pranayama Control of breath ; one of the disciplines of yoga.

prarabdha karma The karma, or action, performed by a man is generally divided into three groups : sanchita, agami, and prarabdha. The sanchita karma is the vast store of accumulated actions done in the past, the fruits of which have not yet been reaped. The agami karma is the action that will be done by the individual in the future. The prarabdha karma is the action that has begun to fructify, the fruit of which is being reaped in this life. It is a part of the sanchita karma, inasmuch as this also is action done in the past. But the difference between the two is that, whereas the sanchita karma is not yet operative, the prarabdha has already begun to operate. According to the Hindus, the fruit of all karmas must be reaped by their doer, and the character and circumstances of the life of the individual are determined by his previous karmas. The prarabdha is the most effective of all karmas, because its consequences cannot be avoided in any way. The realization of God enables one to abstain from future action (agami karma) and to avoid the consequences of all one's accumulated action (sanchita karma) that has not yet begun to operate ; but the prarabdha, which has already begun to bear fruit, must be reaped.

prasad Food or drink that has been offered to the Deity ; also the leavings of a superior's meal. The name Prasad is short for Ramprasad, a mystic poet of Bengal.

pravartaka A beginner in religion.

prema Ecstatic love, divine love of the most intense kind.

prema-bhakti Ecstatic love of God.

Premdas A writer of devotional songs.

puja Ritualistic worship.

puli A kind of cake.

Purana(s) Books of Hindu mythology.

purascharana The repetition of the name of a deity, attended with burnt offerings, oblations, and other rites prescribed in the Vedas.

Puri Situated in Orissa ; it is one of the four principal holy places of India, the other three being Dwaraka, Kedarnath, and Rameswaram ; also one of the ten denominations of monks belonging to the school of Sankara.

purnajnani Perfect knower of Brahman.

Purusha (*Lit.*, a man) A term of the Samkhya philosophy, denoting the eternal Conscious Principle ; the universe evolves from the union of Prakriti and Purusha. The word also denotes the soul and the Absolute.

Qualified Non-dualism A school of Vedanta founded by Ramanuja, according to which the soul and nature are the modes of Brahman, and the individual soul is a part of Brahman.

Radha Sri Krishna's most intimate companion among the gopis of Vrindavan.

Radhakanta (*Lit.*, the Consort of Radha) A name of Sri Krishna.

Radhakunda A place near Mathura associated with Krishna and Radha.

Radhika Same as Radha.

raga-bhakti Supreme love, making one attached only to God.

ragas and raginis Principal and subordinate modes in Hindu music.

Raghuvamsa The name of a Sanskrit treatise by Kalidasa.

Raghuvir A name of Rama ; the Family Deity of Sri Ramakrishna?

Rahu A demon in Hindu mythology, said to cause the eclipse by devouring the sun and the moon.

Rajarajesvari (*Lit.*, the Empress of kings) A name of the Divine Mother.

rajarshi A king who leads a saintly life ; an epithet of Janaka.

rajas The principle of activity or restlessness. See guna.

- rajasic** Pertaining to, or possessed of, *rajas*.
- Rajasuya** The royal sacrifice, performed only by a paramount ruler.
- Rajayoga** The famous treatise on yoga, ascribed to Patanjali; also the yoga described in this treatise.
- Rama(chandra)** The hero of the *Ramayana*, regarded by the Hindus as a Divine Incarnation.
- Ramanānda** A devotee of Sri Chaitanya.
- Ramanuja** A famous saint and philosopher of southern India, the founder of the school of Qualified Nondualism (A.D. 1017—1137).
- Ramayana** A famous Hindu epic.
- Rambha** The name of a celestial maiden.
- Rameswar** Situated at the southernmost extremity of India and considered one of its four principal holy places, the other three being Dwarka, Kedarnath, and Puri.
- Ramlal** A nephew of Sri Ramakrishna and a priest in the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.
- Ramlala** The Boy Rama; also the metal image of Rama worshipped by Sri Ramakrishna.
- Ramlila** A Hindu religious festival depicting Rama's life, which is observed annually by the Hindus of northern India.
- Ramprasad** A Bengali mystic and writer of songs about the Divine Mother.
- Rani** (*Lit.*, queen) A title of honour conferred on a woman.
- rasaddar** Supplier of provisions.
- Rasmani, Rani** A wealthy woman of the sudra caste, the foundress of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.
- Rathayatra** The Hindu Car Festival.
- Ravana** The monster-king of Ceylon, who abducted Sita, the wife of Rama.
- rishi** A seer of Truth; the name is also applied to the pure souls to whom were revealed the words of the Vedas.
- Rudra** A manifestation of Siva.
- rudraksha** Beads made from rudraksha pits, used in making rosaries.
- Rukmini** One of Sri Krishna's wives.
- Rupa and Sanatana** Two of the disciples of Sri Chaitanya.
- sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni** The notes of the Indian musical scale, corresponding to do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si.
- sabha** Assembly.
- Sachi** The mother of Sri Chaitanya; also the consort of Indra.
- sadguru** True teacher.
- sadhaka** An aspirant devoted to the practice of spiritual discipline.
- sadhana** Spiritual discipline.
- Sadharan Brahma Samaj** A branch of the Brahma Samaj.
- sadhu** Holy man; a term generally used with reference to a monk.
- sagar** Ocean.
- saguna** Endowed with attributes.
- Saguna Brahman** Brahman with attributes; the Absolute conceived as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe; also the Personal God according to the Vedanta.
- Sahaja** (*Lit.*, simple one) The term by which a certain religious sect refers to God; also the natural state.
- Sahasrara** The thousand-petalled lotus in the cerebrum. See Kundalini.
- Saiva** A worshipper of Siva.
- sakhya** One of the five attitudes cherished by the dualistic worshipper toward his Chosen Ideal: the attitude of one friend toward another.
- Sakta** A worshipper of Sakti, the Divine Mother, according to the Tantra philosophy.
- Sakti** Power, generally the Creative Power of Brahman; a name of the Divine Mother.
- Sakuntala** A celebrated play by Kalidasa.
- salagram** A stone emblem of God worshipped by the Hindus.
- samadhi** Ecstasy, trance, communion with God.
- Sambhu** A name of Siva.
- Samkhya** One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy; founded by Kapila.
- samsara** The world.
- samskara** The tendencies inherited from previous births.
- sanai** A wind-instrument like an oboe.

Sanaka, Sanatana, Sananda, and Sanat-kumara The first four offspring of Brahma, the Creator, begotten of His mind; they are regarded as highly spiritual persons.

Sanatana Dharma (*Lit.*, the Eternal Religion) Refers to Hinduism, formulated by the rishis of the Vedas.

Sanatana Goswami A disciple of Sri Chaitanya and a great saint of the Vaishnava religion.

sandesh A Bengali sweetmeat made of cheese and sugar.

sandhya Devotions or ritualistic worship performed by caste Hindus every day at stated periods.

Sankara A name of Siva; also short for Sankaracharya, the great Vedantist philosopher.

Sankaracharya One of the greatest philosophers of India, an exponent of Advaita Vedanta (A.D. 788-820).

sannyas The monastic life, the last of the four stages of life. See four stages of life.

sannyasi A Hindu monk.

santa One of the five attitudes cherished by the dualistic worshipper toward his Chosen Ideal. It is the attitude of peace and serenity, in contrast with the other attitudes of love, which create discontent and unrest in the minds of the devotees. Many of the Vaishnavas do not recognize the attitude of santa, since it is not characterized by an intense love of God.

Santih Peace.

Sarada Devi The name of Sri Ramakrishna's wife, also known as the Holy Mother.

Sarasvati The goddess of learning and music.

sari A woman's wearing-cloth.

Sarvabhauma A great scholar and contemporary of Sri Chaitanya.

sastra Scripture; sacred book; code of laws.

Sat Reality, Being.

Satchidananda (*Lit.*, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute) A name of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.

satrancha An Indian game similar to backgammon or parchesi.

sattva The principle of balance or wisdom. See guna.

sattvic Pertaining to, or possessed of, sattva.

Satyabhama A wife of Sri Krishna.

Sabari The daughter of a hunter, and a great devotee of Rama.

sava-sadhana A Tantrik ritual in which a corpse (sava) is used by the worshipper as his seat.

savikalpa samadhi Communion with God in which the distinction between subject and object is retained.

seer A measure or weight equivalent to about two pounds.

siddha (*Lit.*, perfect or boiled) Applies both to the perfected soul and to boiled things.

Siddhesvari A name of the Divine Mother.

siddhi The eight occult powers which the yogi acquires through the practice of yoga; perfection in spiritual life; the intoxicating Indian hemp.

Sikhs A religious and martial sect of the Punjab.

Simhavahini (*Lit.*, One whose bearer is the lion) A name of the Divine Mother.

sishya Disciple.

Sita The wife of Rama.

Siva The Destroyer God; the Third Person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma and Vishnu.

six passions Namely, lust, anger, avarice, delusion, pride, and envy.

six systems See darsanas.

six treasures Namely, treasure, glory, strength, splendour, knowledge, and renunciation; these six in their entirety are the treasures of the Godhead.

smriti The law books, subsidiary to the Vedas, guiding the daily life and conduct of the Hindus.

"Soham" (*Lit.*, "I am He") One of the sacred formulas of the non-dualistic Vedantist.

Sonthals A savage tribe of central India.

sraddhâ Faith.

srâddha A religious ceremony in which food and drink are offered to deceased relatives.

Sri Used as a prefix to the name of a Hindu man, corresponding to Mr.

Sridama A devotee and companion of Sri Krishna.

Srimati A name of Radhika; also used as a prefix to the name of a Hindu woman, corresponding to Miss or Mrs.

Srivas A companion of Sri Chaitanya.
sruti The Vedas.

sthita samadhi Samadhi, or communion with God, in which the aspirant is firmly established in God-Consciousness.

subadar An officer in the Indian army.

Subhadra The sister of Sri Krishna.

subtle body One of the three bodies or seats of the soul. At death the subtle body accompanies the soul in its transmigration; during the dream state the soul identifies itself with the subtle body. See causal body.

Sudama A devotee and companion of Sri Krishna.

sudra The fourth caste in Hindu society.

Suka(deva) The narrator of the *Bhagavata* and son of Vyasa, regarded as one of India's ideal monks.

Sukracharya A holy man described in the Purana, and the spiritual preceptor of the asuras or demons.

Sumbha and Nisumbha Two demons slain by the Divine Mother. The story is told in the *Chandi*.

Sumeru The sacred Mount Meru of Hindu mythology, around which all the planets are said to revolve.

Sushumna Sushumna, Ida, and Pingala are the three prominent nadis, or nerves, among the innumerable nerves in the nervous system. Of these, again, the Sushumna is the most important, being the point of harmony of the other two and lying, as it does, between them. The Ida is on the left side, and the Pingala is on the right. The Sushumna, through which the awakened spiritual energy rises, is described as the Brahmavartman or Pathway to Brahman. The Ida and Pingala are outside the spine; the Sushumna is situated within the spinal column and extends from the base of the spine to the brain. See Kundalini.

Svadhithana The second centre in the Sushumna. See Kundalini.

Swami (*Lit.*, lord) A title of the monks belonging to the Vedanta school.

Swarup A disciple of Sri Chaitanya.
swastyayana A religious rite performed to secure welfare or avert a calamity.

Syama (*Lit.*, the Dark One) A name of Kali, the Divine Mother.

Syamakunda A place near Mathura associated with Sri Krishna.

Syamalasundara A name of Sri Krishna.

Syamasundar A name of Sri Krishna.

Tagore An aristocratic brahmin family of Bengal.

tamala A tree with dark-blue leaves, a favourite tree of Sri Krishna.

tamas The principle of inertia or dullness. See guna.

tamasik Pertaining to, or possessed of, *tamas*.

tanpura A stringed musical instrument.

Tantra A system of religious philosophy in which the Divine Mother, or Power, is the Ultimate Reality; also the scriptures dealing with this philosophy.

Tantrik A follower of Tantra; also, pertaining to Tantra.

tapasya Religious austerity.

Tara (*Lit.*, Redeemer) A name of the Divine Mother.

tarpan A ceremony in which a libation of water is made to dead relatives.

Tattvajnana The Knowledge of "Reality."

teli A member of the oil-man caste.

tilak A mark of sandal-paste or other material, worn on the forehead to denote one's religious affiliation.

Tillotama A celestial maiden.

Totapuri The sannyasi who initiated Sri Ramakrishna into monastic life.

Trailinga Swami A holy man who lived in Benares and was a contemporary of Sri Ramakrishna.

Tretayuga The second of the four yugas or cycles. See yuga.

tribhanga (*Lit.*, bent in three places)
 An epithet of Sri Krishna.

Tukaram The name of a saint of Bombay.

tulsi A plant sacred to Vishnu.

Tulsi(das) A great devotee of Rama and the writer of a life of Rama.

Turiya (*Lit.*, the fourth) A name of the Transcendental Brahman, which transcends and pervades the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep.

twenty-four tattvas, or cosmic principles
 According to the Samkhya philosophy the twenty-four tattvas, or cosmic principles, are : the five great elements in their subtle forms (ether, air, fire, water, earth) ; ego, or "I-consciousness" ; buddhi, or intelligence ; Avyakta, or the Unmanifested (in which sattva, rajas, and tamas remain in an undifferentiated state) ; the five organs of action (hands, feet, organ of speech, organ of generation, organ of evacuation) ; the five organs of knowledge (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) ; manas, or mind ; and the five sense-objects (sound, touch, form, taste, smell). They all belong to Prakriti or Nature, and are different from Purusha, or Consciousness.

twice-born A man belonging to the brahmin, kshatriya (warrior), or vaisya (merchant) caste, who has his second, or spiritual, birth at the time of his investiture with the sacred thread.

Uddhava The name of a follower of Sri Krishna.

Uma The daughter of King Himalaya, and the Consort of Siva ; She is an Incarnation of the Divine Mother.

Unmana samadhi Samadhi in which the functioning of the mind does not altogether stop.

upadhi A term of the Vedanta philosophy denoting the limitations imposed upon the Self through ignorance, by which one is bound to worldly life.

Upanishad(s) The well-known scriptures of the Hindus.

upasana Worship.

vaidhi-bhakti Devotion to God associated with rites and ceremonies prescribed in the scriptures.

Vaidyanath A holy place in Behar.

Vaikuntha The heaven of the Vaishnavas.

vairagya Renunciation.

Vaisakh The first month of the Hindu calendar, falling in the summer season.

Vaisheshika One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, founded by Kanada.

Vaishnava (*Lit.*, follower of Vishnu)
 A member of the well-known dualistic sect of that name, generally the followers of Sri Chaitanya in Bengal and of Ramanuja and Madhva in south India.

vaisya The third or merchant caste in Hindu society.

Vajrasana A centre in the Sushumna.

Vali A king who was punished by God in His Incarnation as Vamana, or the Dwarf, for his excessive charity and condemned to rule over the nether world.

Vâli A monkey chieftain mentioned in the *Ramayana* and killed by Rama.

Valmiki The author of the *Ramayana*.

vanaprastha The third of the four stages of life : the life of retirement, when husband and wife practise contemplation and other spiritual disciplines. See four stages of life.

Varuna The presiding deity of the ocean in Hindu mythology.

Vasishttha The name of a sage mentioned in the Purana.

Vasudeva The father of Sri Krishna.

Vasus A class of celestial beings.

vatsalya One of the five attitudes cherished by the dualistic worshipper toward his Chosen Ideal : the attitude of a mother toward her child.

Vedanta One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, formulated by Vyasa.

Vedantist A follower of Vedanta.

Veda(s) The most sacred scriptures of the Hindus.

vichara Reasoning.

Videha (*Lit.*, detached from the body) An epithet given to King

- Janaka on account of the spirit of detachment he showed toward the world.
- Vidura The name of a great devotee of Sri Krishna mentioned in the *Mahabharata*.
- vidya Knowledge leading to liberation, i.e., to the Ultimate Reality.
- vidyadhari Demigoddess.
- vidyamaya The "maya of knowledge." See *avidyamaya*.
- Vidyasagar, Iswara Chandra A great educator and philanthropist of Bengal.
- vidyasakti Spiritual power.
- Vijaya day The last day of the worship of Durga, when the image is immersed in water.
- vijnana Special Knowledge of the Absolute, by which one affirms the universe and sees it as the manifestation of Brahman.
- vijnanamayakosha The sheath of intelligence. See *kosha*.
- vijnani One endowed with vijnana.
- vilwa Same as *bel*.
- vina A stringed musical instrument.
- Virat The first progeny of Brahman in Hindu cosmology; the Spirit in the form of the universe; the All-pervading Spirit.
- Visalakshi (*Lit.*, the Large-eyed One) A name of the Divine Mother; also the name of a stream near Kamarpukur.
- Vishnu The Preserver God; the Second Person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma and Siva; the Personal God of the Vaishnavas.
- Visishtadvaita The philosophy of Qualified Non-dualism.
- Visuddha The fifth centre in the Sushumna. See *Kundalini*.
- Viswamitra The name of a sage mentioned in the *Ramayana*. He was a companion and counsellor of Rama. Though born a kshatriya, by dint of his austerities he was raised to the status of a brahmin.
- Viswanath See *Captain*.
- viveka Discrimination.
- Vivekachudamani* A treatise on Vedanta by Sankara.
- Vrindavan A town on the bank of the Jamuna river associated with Sri Krishna's childhood.
- Vyasa The compiler of the Vedas and father of Sukadeva.
- Wish-fulfilling Tree. See *Kalpataru*.
- Yama The King of Death.
- Yasoda Sri Krishna's foster-mother.
- yatra A country theatrical performance.
- yoga Union of the individual soul and the Universal Soul; also the method by which to realize this union.
- Yogamaya The union of Purusha, the male principle, and Prakriti, the female principle, of Reality; also Sakti, or Divine Power.
- yoga samadhi The samadhi that results when the devotee is united with God.
- Yogavasishta* The name of a well-known book on Vedanta.
- yogi One who practises yoga.
- yogini Woman yogi.
- Yogopanishad* The name of an Upanishad.
- Yudhisthira, King One of the principal heroes of the *Mahabharata*, known for his truthfulness, righteousness, and piety.
- yuga A cycle or world period. According to Hindu mythology the duration of the world is divided into four yugas, namely, Satya, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali. In the first, also known as the Golden Age, there is a great preponderance of virtue among men, but with each succeeding yuga virtue diminishes and vice increases. In the Kaliyuga there is a minimum of virtue and a great excess of vice. The world is said to be now passing through the Kaliyuga.
- Yugala Murti The conjoined figures of a pair; generally used to denote the combined figures of Radha and Krishna.
- zemindar Landlord.



INDEX OF SONGS AND HYMNS

(References are for the most part to complete songs and hymns. Of those that have nowhere been given in their entirety, the most complete example is listed. Songs and hymns of which less than three lines have been given are omitted from this index.)

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